



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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

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U.S. Election Briefs: Abolish Nuclear Weapons

In a new series of two-page briefs, *Faithful Voting and Global Concerns*, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns addresses key global issues for voters to consider for the 2020 U.S. elections. Inspired by the gospel and Maryknoll Missioners' commitment to stand with vulnerable communities around the world, we urge U.S. citizens to consider these issues and vote to advance the cause of peace, social justice, and the integrity of creation. This is a preview of the first issue. The entire series of two-page briefs will be available here: <https://bit.ly/ElectionBriefsMOGC>

Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Invest in Peace

See

Nuclear weapons and climate change are widely recognized by scientists and security experts as “twin existential threats” to life on earth. While much more action is needed, the gravity of climate change has largely entered the global consciousness, thanks to global youth activism. But since the end of the Cold War, the nuclear threat has failed to grab the public imagination in the same way. Experts warn that the danger of nuclear annihilation is greater than ever, citing the dismantling of the global arms control regime, as world leaders walk away from agreements and multilateral structures which reduce the nuclear threat with no plans for how to replace them. Vast resources are spent on new nuclear weapons, including the development and deployment of “low-yield” nuclear weapons which can be used to wage “winnable” wars and new Pentagon plans for a nuclear first strike.

Judge

Pope Francis and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops have repeatedly condemned the possession of nuclear weapons – even for purposes of deterrence – as sinful and unacceptable. Nuclear weapons are a threat to life and to our common home, and money spent on our nuclear arsenal should instead be spent to promote economic and climate justice, and build a security regime rooted in trust and enforced by effective, nonviolent measures. Nuclear disarmament is an essential element of the Church’s call to protect all life and defend human dignity.

Act

Catholic voters are left facing a gap between the official position of the U.S. government and most political leaders on the one hand, and the clear teachings of the Church on the other. But there are concrete policy commitments we can seek from candidates:

1. Renew the crucial New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) – the centerpiece of nuclear arms control and verification between the U.S. and Russia – set to expire in February, 2021.
2. Re-enter the Iran nuclear agreement (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), from which the U.S. withdrew in 2018. Then, negotiate to strengthen it.
3. Pursue the five policy solutions of the Back From The Brink campaign to prevent nuclear war:
 - Renounce the option of using nuclear weapons first.
 - End the sole, unchecked authority of any president to launch a nuclear attack.
 - Take U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert.
 - Cancel the plan to replace the U.S. nuclear arsenal with enhanced weapons.
 - Actively pursue a verifiable agreement among nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.



Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Invest in Peace

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns' 2020 Election Briefs address key global issues for voters to consider. Inspired by the Gospel and Maryknoll missioners' commitment to stand with vulnerable communities around the world, we urge U.S. citizens to consider these issues and vote to advance the cause of peace, social justice, and the integrity of creation.

See

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Nukes By the Numbers

- Nuclear weapons spending in 2021 White House Budget: \$48.7 billion.
- Change from 2020: +19%
- Change in diplomatic budget from 2020 to 2021: -22%
- Projected cost of building and maintaining the U.S. nuclear arsenal for the next 10 years: at least \$500 billion (CBO 2019 estimate adjusted for Trump Administration 2021 budget increase).
- For the next 30 years: \$1.5 trillion
- Cost of 100,000 ICU-grade ventilators for COVID-19 treatment: \$5 billion
- Number of U.S. nuclear warheads: Total: 5,800 (1,750 deployed warheads, 2,050 stockpiled warheads (both active and inactive), plus 2,000 retired, intact warheads.) The U.S. and Russia possess approximately 90% of the world's estimated 13,000 nuclear warheads.

Coronavirus Connection

The coronavirus epidemic is a stark reminder that we live in a globally interdependent world. True security demands international structures for building trust and cooperation.

“We are witnessing an erosion of multilateralism which is all the more serious in light of the growth of new forms of military technology. Such an approach seems highly incongruous in today’s context of interconnectedness; it represents a situation that urgently calls for the attention and commitment of all leaders.” – Pope Francis, “Address of the Holy Father on Nuclear Weapons,” Nagasaki, 24 November 2019

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

www.maryknollogc.org

Maryknoll Missioners and the Coronavirus

The Maryknoll Sisters, Fathers and Brothers, and Lay Missioner communities have faced challenges and loss during the novel coronavirus pandemic.

The Maryknoll Sisters announced via social media on April 16 that the pandemic had “hit home and reached our Maryknoll Sisters Center in Ossining, NY.” They shared that three sisters had passed away from COVID-19 and 24 more had tested positive for the virus and relocated to a separate building where they would receive more intensive medical care. Eight staff members at the Center also tested positive. [As of April 24, a total of 30 sisters and 10 staffers have tested positive.]

In their statement the Maryknoll Sisters said, “We remember the beautiful spirits of our Sisters who have been called home to God and pray our other Sisters and Staff will fully recover and return home soon. It remains our top priority to contain this virus as much as we can, to keep our employees and staff at the center safe, and the rest of our Sisters safe.”

Since sharing their message, the Sisters have received an outpouring of support. Fr. James Martin, the popular Jesuit author, shared their message on his own social media account, calling the Maryknoll Sisters “some of the bravest women I know.”

The Sisters have also received care packages of masks, gloves and other protective equipment from some of the sisters and priests in China who had studied at colleges across the United States through the Maryknoll Society's formation program. “This was Maryknoll reaching out 15-20 years ago to help the church in China and now the church in China is reaching out to help us here,” Sister Antoinette Gutzler, president of the Maryknoll Sisters, said in an article in Patch.

More donations have come from Hong Kong and the Philippines and other Asian locations where the sisters have served on mission for many years and where people have been impacted by the coronavirus since January. “It's a return in ways we never expected,” Sr. Gutzler said.

The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers have also been hit hard by the virus. Father Raymond Finch, Superior General, told Catholic News Service on April 21 that nine priests living at the order's residential facilities in Ossining, New York, had died since April 2. The first priest who died tested positive for the virus. The eight others showed symptoms of the disease but without confirmed diagnoses of COVID-19. Other members of the community who have shown symptoms are isolated in the residence.

To honor these front-line workers, the Fathers and

Brothers announced that, every evening, the seminary building in Ossining will be lit in blue to pay honor and tribute to Maryknoll's essential service employees in health care, custodial and housekeeping, as well as all essential services workers throughout the world. “Words cannot express our gratitude to the men and women working in health care, day and night here at Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers in Ossining, NY, as well as in all of the Society Houses and Residences.”

The Fathers and Brothers invite everyone to join a livestream celebration of the Mass at the Seminary every Sunday at 10 a.m. Eastern Time on Facebook.

Maryknoll Magazine has featured several stories about missioners during the pandemic. Fr. Mike Bassano in South Sudan broadcasts Sunday Mass on public radio at a UN camp for internally displaced persons. Fr. Joe Fedora in Peru serves as the “unofficial virtual chaplain” for the residents of his apartment building after a neighbor died of COVID-19 and the entire building was ordered to lockdown. Fr. Joe Thaler in Nepal celebrates his graduates of a sewing training program for people with disabilities who are making face masks from their home villages while in quarantine. Two Maryknoll seminarians in Bolivia have jumped in to do the work left undone after international volunteers were evacuated.

The Maryknoll Lay Missioners are maintaining a “coronavirus resources” webpage where they have compiled health, spiritual, family, and advocacy resources related to the pandemic. “These times of global crisis, uncertainty and worry around the coronavirus invite us to a wider communal response of solidarity – beyond our homes and hometowns — so that no one is isolated even amidst the self-containing or quarantines,” said Ted Miles, executive director of the Lay Missioners.

In addition, Lay Missioners are sharing updates about their communities and their work during the pandemic. There are updates from missioners in El Paso, Texas, El Salvador, Cambodia, Brazil, and more. Find them at <https://mklm.org/coronavirus-resources/>

“This Easter we have reflected with gratitude on the hope of new life for our broken and suffering world,” writes Kathy Bond, a Lay Missioner in Brazil. “Waiting at the Tomb has taken on a new meaning for most of the world, including us, during the COVID-19 crisis... May we all be transformed into more genuine followers of the serving Jesus.” §

Watch a local news segment on Maryknoll and the toll off the coronavirus: <https://bit.ly/MaryknollABC>

Coronavirus Jubilee Debt Relief

Religious and secular organizations have launched a global campaign for debt relief for impoverished countries working to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the dire economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic have emerged, a network of institutions, including the Holy See, has advanced a worldwide campaign to provide debt relief for impoverished countries struggling to fight the coronavirus pandemic. Their goal is to avert financial ruin for low- and middle-income countries during the crisis, and to help mitigate a global financial crisis, which experts say could be the worst since the Great Depression.

The campaign has made impressive gains so far, securing at least temporary debt relief for many impoverished countries. But the fight is far from over.

This new campaign is inspired by previous debt relief campaigns that have become legendary for their success in gaining global momentum. The most famous of these campaigns was the Jubilee 2000 campaign, which began in the 1990's and culminated in 2000.

In that campaign, global leaders – including Pope John Paul II – used the biblical concept of “jubilee” debt cancellation on special anniversaries to garner support for mass debt cancellation for impoverished countries at the turn of the millennium. The campaign was eventually able to ensure 100 billion dollars of debt cancellation for 35 of the world’s poorest countries, allowing these countries to instead invest the money owed to major organizations such as the World Bank and IMF into development and anti-poverty efforts.

Subsequent debt relief campaigns were initiated for Haiti after the 2008 financial crisis and again after its devastating earthquake in 2010, as well as for several African nations fighting the Ebola crisis in 2014. For these crises, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) created what is now called the Catastrophic Containment and Relief Trust, a fund which can cover debt payments for countries experiencing a crisis for a certain number of months. It relies on wealthy countries to contribute to the fund.

The IMF has already activated the use of the trust for 25 of the world’s poorest countries, cancelling debts for six months. Likewise, the G20, the group of the world’s 20 largest economies, suspended debt payments from May 1 to the end of the year for 73 primarily low-

income countries. But advocacy organizations say these measures are not enough.

Jubilee USA Network, the U.S. branch of the international Jubilee movement, representing over 700 religious organizations, has called this short-term debt cancellation a “positive step,” but argues that much more needs to be done to expand access to financial relief for these and other countries whose economies will be devastated by the financial crisis and left unable to recover in the long-term.

Eric LeCompte, director of Jubilee USA Network, said in a statement, “All of the countries [chosen to receive debt relief] could benefit from more than just a 6-month debt cancellation. As the poorest countries in the world, they really need full cancellation [of their debts].”

The next step, Jubilee USA Network says, is to push for the availability of \$140 billion in gold reserves held by the IMF and for “Special Drawing Rights” that will allow impoverished countries to immediately access these reserves as the crisis deepens. This will help prevent a downward spiral that will hurt the most vulnerable communities around the world most severely. For the U.S. campaign, an important step will be to lobby Congress to work with the IMF to authorize the use of Special Drawing Rights.

On Easter Sunday, Pope Francis reiterated his support for the debt relief campaign, saying, “may all nations be put in a position to meet the greatest needs of the moment through the reduction, if not the forgiveness, of the debt burdening the balance sheets of the poorest nations.”

The Holy See has been working hard on diplomacy efforts to advance the campaign. Ultimately, Pope Francis has emphasized that these kinds of actions are about demonstrating solidarity with those most vulnerable: “Let us show mercy to those who are most vulnerable; for only in this way will we build a new world.” §

Faith in action: Sign the petition to the IMF to cancel debts for low- and middle-income countries so those countries will have more money to invest in their response to the coronavirus pandemic:
<https://bit.ly/IMFJubilee2020>



COVID-19 and a Global Ceasefire

A growing number of world leaders are calling for a global ceasefire to allow war-torn countries to direct attention and resources toward addressing the impact of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

On March 23, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres called for a global ceasefire in light of the novel coronavirus pandemic. His call was quickly echoed by Pope Francis and other leaders. Several warring parties have initiated ceasefires in response, with mixed success. The United States and Russia have urged ceasefires in certain conflicts, but the two superpowers have blocked the UN Security Council from demanding universal compliance with the Secretary General's call.

In his initial call for a ceasefire, Guterres drew a stark contrast between war and the "intense solidarity and cooperation" needed to confront the pandemic. He continued, "[I]n war-ravaged countries, health systems have collapsed. Health professionals... have often been targeted. Refugees and others displaced by violent conflict are doubly vulnerable."

Drawing a broad distinction between the nonviolent work of aid and diplomacy and the violence of war, Guterres said, "[A] global ceasefire is, of course, absolutely essential for an effective response to the crisis in areas of conflict but is also a value in itself. War doesn't make any sense when we have an epidemic, but war doesn't make any sense in any circumstances."

Joining the call for a ceasefire in his March 29 Angelus address, Pope Francis emphasized the ways the pandemic has highlighted the folly of war. "May our joint fight against the pandemic bring everyone to recognize the great need to reinforce brotherly and sisterly bonds as members of a single human family," the pope said.

Earlier the same day, Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, called for a "jubilee" – a forgiveness of debts for individuals and for impoverished countries – in light of the pandemic.

In a reflection published by Pax Christi International, Marie Dennis, former director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, drew a direct connection between this need for economic solidarity and the cost of war. Calling for a new understanding of global security rooted in "diplomacy, dialogue, reciprocity and a multilateral, collaborative approach to solving very real and critical global problems," Dennis emphasized that authentic security rooted in nonviolence and solidarity demands that resources be allocated away from military spending and toward these larger goals of human security.

In the same vein, the Maryknoll Office for Global

Concerns joined other organizations in a letter urging Congress not to allocate any additional funds to the Pentagon in 2020 as part of its response to the virus.

The response by armed actors to the call for a ceasefire has been encouraging but incomplete. Over 70 countries have joined the call. Eleven countries have seen ceasefires implemented, including by groups fighting in Cameroon, Colombia, the Philippines, Sudan, Syria, and Thailand.

In some warzones, parties expressed their intention to join the ceasefire, or implemented truces fleetingly, before fighting resumed. Notably, Yemen, Ukraine, Libya, and Myanmar have seen ceasefires announced and then broken. While such setbacks are disheartening, the expressions of openness to a ceasefire offer opportunities to apply pressure and continue to urge a halt to hostilities.

One significant barrier to implementing a global ceasefire has been resistance by the U.S. and Russia, both permanent members of the UN Security Council. While the two governments have pushed for ceasefires in Yemen, Libya, and elsewhere, and the Security Council has called for compliance in Afghanistan, Russian and U.S. officials have refused to support a more robust call for universal compliance from the Security Council, for fears it would interfere with their own military operations.

Church leaders have urged further compliance where possible. Cardinal Charles Bo, in war-torn Myanmar, declared, "Now is the time for a speedy, aggressive, respectful decision" just days before the outgoing UN human rights monitor there issued new allegations of war crimes in a searing farewell statement, accusing the national army of "systematically violating the most fundamental principles of international humanitarian law and human rights" while the world is occupied with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cardinal Bo urged armed actors to "lay down all weapons and [stop] acts of aggression." The prelate offered to "mediate a new and timely dialogue among diverse parties." But Guterres warned actors to move quickly. "We do not have much time. COVID-19 has shown how swiftly it can move across borders and devastate countries and bring life to a standstill." §

Faith in action: Sign a petition calling for a global ceasefire: <https://bit.ly/PAceasefire>

COVID-19 and Global Development

The following is a summary of latest reports and developments at the UN in response to the impacts of the novel coronavirus pandemic on global development goals.

In a webinar hosted by the United Nations on April 9, UN Chief Economist Elliot Harris described the social, economic, and financial impacts of COVID-19 as unprecedented. “The health crisis, the economic downturn, the financial upheaval – these could all reverse much of the progress made toward the Sustainable Development Goals over the past five years,” the IMF-trained economist said.

The webinar speakers described a vicious cycle of decreasing consumption and decreasing employment caused by lockdown and social distancing measures imposed by many national governments to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus. Together with growing health care costs, many countries are experiencing increases in poverty and inequalities as their economies sink into a deflationary spiral.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects global economic growth in 2020 to be negative three percent. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), about 81 percent of the global workforce has been affected – that’s four out five people in the workforce. The ILO calculates that the lost work hours are equivalent to 195 million full time jobs.

Trust in social institutions and social cohesion is also being tested, as some governments have enacted strict measures of control as part of their pandemic response. For example, in mid-March, President Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines declared a month-long lockdown of metropolitan Manila, without much preparation or warning for its 12.8 million people. As COVID-19 cases have surged in the Southeast Asian country, the president has extended Manila’s lockdown to May 15.

Maryknoll Sister Marvie Misolas, originally from the Philippines and now serving as a Maryknoll representative at the UN in New York, heard reports of chaos on the streets of Manila on the first day of the lockdown. “Many vulnerable people working in the informal sector and as daily wage earners were forced to frantically search for affordable food because they knew their work and wages would shrink or end.” Meager government food provisions have been slow in coming. According to local reports, in one impoverished neighborhood in densely packed Quezon City, people went to the streets to protest because they were hungry and 23 people were arrested and detained.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet specifically named the Philippines, Chi-

na, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and El Salvador as countries with alleged human rights violations in the guise of coronavirus restrictions. “Shooting, detaining, or abusing someone for breaking a curfew because they are desperately searching for food is clearly an unacceptable and unlawful response,” Bachelet said in a speech in Geneva on April 27.

The fiscal impact of the pandemic, and its resulting social and political strains, are particularly worrisome for countries already heavily burdened by debt. In a 12-page policy brief released on April 17 and entitled “Debt and COVID-19: A Global Response in Solidarity,” the UN states that “rates of economic growth have not been as high as in the 2000s in most countries, partly due to the decline in commodity prices that reduced the capacity of many countries to pay. By January 2020, the debt of 44 percent of least developed and other low-income developing countries was already at high risk or in distress.”

“Initial estimates indicate that Africa may be in its first recession in the last 25 years, while Latin America and the Caribbean is facing the worst recession ever,” the UN brief goes on. “Similar decelerations are affecting many countries in the world, including in Asia and the Arab Region.”

Lacking the necessary resources to address the pandemic, such countries will only incur more debt. “As we strive to address the health emergency, debt relief must be an important part of the response to the associated development emergency,” the UN recommends.

Just as the pandemic has hit all countries, debt relief cannot focus solely on the poorest countries. “Debt relief should not be based on level of income but on vulnerability,” the UN recommends. “Middle-income countries, home to 75 percent of the world’s population and 62 percent of the world’s poor, are highly vulnerable to a debt crisis, lost market access and capital outflows.

The COVID-19 pandemic will have long term effects on the implementation of the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which lays out 17 goals for 2030 in order to build a more equitable, sustainable world. UN Secretary General António Guterres said in his COVID-19 response plan released on March 27 that the global community must “learn from this crisis and build back better.” §

World Bank Reforms Passed in COVID-19 Bill

The World Bank adopts reforms to receive funding for COVID-19 related projects.

The CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act, a nearly \$500 billion emergency economic stimulus package signed into law on March 27, includes funding to the World Bank for COVID-19-related development projects, contingent on reforms to increase transparency, democratic participation, and accountability in World Bank investments and equality in several World Bank initiatives. Civil society organizations, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, have long called for these reforms and are hopeful that they will protect and promote the welfare of communities the World Bank is meant to serve.

One critical reform requires the World Bank's private investment arm – the International Finance Corporation (IFC) – to disclose basic information for their projects funded via “financial intermediaries.” According to Inclusive Development International, an organization that investigates the opaque financing behind development projects that harm local communities, the IFC “funneled \$50 billion into financial intermediaries such as commercial banks, private equity funds, and hedge funds between 2010 and 2015. That's more than three times what the rest of the World Bank Group invested in education, and 50 percent more than it did in health care.”

In the past, the MOGC has engaged in advocacy on behalf of communities which have experienced human rights violations and displacement due to projects financed by the IFC through financial intermediaries, including the Santa Rita Dam in Guatemala that displaced 160 families in 2014.

The Act also compels the IFC to disclose and limit how much money corporations can access from the International Development Assistance program, a World Bank fund designated to help the most impoverished countries. Until recently, the IFC had not made public the names of private companies receiving its funds and the amounts awarded.

To increase accountability, the IFC has agreed to initiate a transparent review of its Compliance Advisory Ombudsman office, an independent agency that evaluates claims against the IFC from groups affected negatively by its projects. In the past, this agency has made important decisions to deliver justice for local communities.

Some civil society organizations are concerned that the Ombudsman office will be weakened after its evaluation. Hopefully, the new review process will allow civil society to have more input.

The new reforms also require the IFC to stop funding private education in developing countries, something it has done for 25 years. Civil society organizations have made significant complaints for years about private education systems in developing countries which disadvantage impoverished families, girls, and those who are disabled.

The Bridge Academies in Kenya are an example of a problematic private education organization funded by the IFC. In 2018, the East African Centre for Human Rights, eight families of students, and current and former teachers filed a complaint to the IFC regarding their support of the Bridge Academics. The complainants allege that the Bridge Academies failed to properly register their schools or adhere to Kenya's education standards for academics and teacher training, and that the schools charged exorbitant fees for impoverished families. They also allege that students with disabilities were not admitted, that teachers were forced to work long hours with low wages, and that the company attempted to silence critics through lawsuits.

Father Frank Breen, MM, a missionary in Kenya for nearly 30 years, witnessed some of the problems in the Kenyan education system. “These [academies] are basically rip-offs,” Fr. Breen said, “enabling owners of the schools to make profits by paying teachers extremely low salaries and not facilitating true education in the schools. Even now, as it is, with the government subsidizing government schools, most Kenyans cannot afford to pay for education. Education is just too expensive for developing countries, yet essential for their further development. It is an absurd mistake for the World Bank to promote private schools rather than improving public education in Africa.”

The reforms also instruct the World Bank to audit the IFC's current investments in Myanmar and establish enhanced human rights oversight, especially for its riskiest investments in the war-torn Southeast Asian country. Such oversight includes ensuring that none of IFC's investments benefit the military in Myanmar, given their involvement in gross human rights violations in recent years.

On the whole, civil society organizations welcome these long sought-after reforms. The Bank Information Center said in a statement the reforms “will undoubtedly have a ripple effect across the development finance landscape.” §

Philippines: Free Child Prisoners

Irish Columban missionary Fr. Shay Cullen in the Philippines published the following article on the Preda Foundation website on April 17, 2020. <https://bit.ly/CullenPreda>

Many thousands [of children in the Philippines] are imprisoned without any evidence against them and without being charged. Many are jailed for non-serious offenses. The coronavirus puts them in grave danger of death, a painful and desperate death. They die gasping from slow suffocation, alone, abandoned, unaided, unknown, isolated and unreported as if they never existed.

The children are the most vulnerable as they are weak from malnutrition, racked by asthma, some with tuberculosis and damaged by physical and sexual abuse and hurt. They are jailed in subhuman conditions. Most sleep on concrete floors and in sub-human conditions. They are deprived of education, exercise, sunlight, fresh air, good food, medical help, legal help, entertainment, visitors, without showers and toilets. It is a desperate, dangerous situation. They must be freed at once.

I can reveal and prove that many of them are tortured. Here is a small fragment of the evidence of their torture in their own pictures. Visit www.preda.org/gallery/jailed-children.

Raymond (not his real name), 13 years old, is now safe in the Preda home for rescued boys. He is a small boy, one of many, picked up on the streets by the tanods (local community guards) in Metro Manila and jailed in the so-called Bahay Pagasa (House of Hope). He, like others, ran away from an abusive, violent father. He lived on the streets begging. Like hundreds of street children, he had nowhere to hide and was jailed. Just imagine if your young boy was punished like this.

There are six images drawn on the page. In Raymond's drawing, he shows the torture and abuse he suffered in the local government-run Bahay Pagasa. It reads like the torture that suspected terrorists were made to suffer.

On a single page are six images, the first a picture of flies on rotten food. They ate bad tasting, fly-infested expired food from cans. The cans were likely donated by companies. Then the centre's budget for fresh food disappeared.

The second image is of Raymond forced to climb the steel bars of the cell and left to hang there for pain-filled hours, a cruel punishment. Sometimes, he was punched and whacked with a rubber slipper. Below that, to the left, Raymond is shown being beaten with a stick and spat upon as if he was dirt. To the centre right is a drawing of when he is sleeping. The older boys, some

adults or the guards put toothpaste in his eyes causing painful stinging and beat him with a rubber slipper when he fights back.

In the upper right side of the drawing, Raymond shows how he was put in a steel drum and the others beat the sides of the drum to inflict severe noise, causing pain, hurting and damaging his eardrums. The bottom right side of the drawing is when he was forced to clean the filthy, clogged toilet bowl. He sometimes sleep on metal grills. The Bahay Pagasa is a regime of cruel torture and child abuse and it is common.

The Philippines system of law enforcement is very weak, arbitrary and in general there is much abuse of authority. This is the great hidden scandal of the local governments – the torture of children in the Bahay Pagasa. They need to be overhauled and made compliant with the guidelines issued by the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (JJWC).

There are many more child victims who have and are suffering like this. We must raise our voices in any way we can and demand that they be released without delay.

As Jesus of Nazareth said, to be his true follower we have to have commitment and action to help free the oppressed and the captives as he did (Luke 4:18). To be a member of God's family, we will be asked when did we visit the prisoners and help them (Matthew 25:35)? Matthew exposed the torture and massacre of the children by King Herod (Matthew 3:16) and he wrote about how Jesus told his audience that the most important in the world are children.

Let's us act now. Send this article to the Commission on Human Rights at chrcc@yahoo.com and Secretary Eduardo Año of the Department of Interior and Local Government at emano@dilg.gov.ph. Ask him to act with the JJWC headed by the Secretary Rolando Bautista of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). The DSWD is the "lead social protection agency" that is requesting the release of old and sick prisoners so they, too, must release all detained children in the different Bahay Pagasa. Then, they must act to close the Bahay Pagasa that are houses of torture and abuse and instead build genuine child development centers. Acting together, we can bring change. §

Faith in action: Watch this video from the Preda foundation: <https://bit.ly/Preda20>.

COVID-19 Impacts East Africa

Maryknoll Lay Missioner Susan Nagele, who worked as a medical doctor in East Africa for 33 years, analyzes the region's response to the pandemic and shares updates from Maryknoll Missioners.

East African nations are facing enormous challenges due to the coronavirus pandemic, which struck during an already challenging year filled with climate-induced natural disasters and locust swarms. As governments and non-governmental organizations in the region work to avert the worst impacts of the pandemic, local communities are also responding creatively to help the most vulnerable. As one Kenyan political analyst and author, Nanjala Nyabola, said, “We don’t have the facilities [to treat the virus], but we have a long history of responding to crisis, mobilizing around public health. The public is trying to believe and act communally.”

In Kenya, lockdowns were introduced after the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed on March 12. A curfew imposed on March 26 increased tension and violence, including police beatings of civilians. People who live and work in the informal settlements and business sector are suffering greatly under the restrictions.

However, local communities are finding ways to support one another. In Mombasa, Kenya, Maryknoll Lay Missioner Kathy Flatoff works with parish leaders and priests at St. Patrick Catholic Church in the city’s largest informal settlement to assist vulnerable families. Donations from around the world are channeled via cellphone transfers to needy people identified by parish leaders. Prioritizing vulnerable women first, the leaders periodically distribute the equivalent of about five U.S. dollars to the individuals, which allows them to buy food for their families, support the local economy, and avoid large food distribution centers.

In Uganda, initial efforts to contain the disease seemed successful by mid-April, when the country saw only 55 cases of COVID-19 and no recorded deaths. Since then, however, new cases of the disease are on the rise.

Having experienced previous epidemics, including Ebola, Ugandans complied almost immediately with the suspension of international flights and restrictions on internal movement. Some food vendors reportedly slept in their market stalls for fourteen days to avoid exposing themselves and others to infection. The government of Uganda has distributed food to 1.5 million vulnerable families and has halted evictions of communities from contested lands.

In contrast, the government of Tanzania has struggled with mixed messaging in its response to the pandemic. The president, John Magufuli, encouraged citi-

zens to continue to gather in places of worship to “rid the body of Christ of this devilish virus.” However, Bishop Severine Niwemugizi of Rulenge-Ngara decided to suspend all religious gatherings for one month.

Maryknoll Missioners at the Lake House of Prayer in Mwanza, Tanzania, have asked the faithful to continue their prayers in the safety of their homes. Meanwhile, missioners there are providing culturally sensitive public health education and have organized the local production of over one thousand face coverings.

In South Sudan, one of the most fragile nations in the world, five cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed with the limited testing available. The World Health Organization has delivered testing supplies and protective equipment to prepare for the expected progression of the disease. After the government partially locked down movement, closing schools and roads, Lay Missioner Gabe Hurrish has been unable to return to Juba after a retreat in Kuron Peace Village in southeast South Sudan. Fr. Mike Bassano in Malakal is not allowed to enter the section of the UN camp for internally displaced persons where he is the only priest. Both continue to provide pastoral and educational assistance as they are able. Fr. Bassano broadcasts Sunday Mass via radio.

It is expected that the pandemic will easily overwhelm the available health care services on the African continent. Although the population is young, with nearly 60 percent of people under age 25, it is generally vulnerable. Fifty-six percent of people live in crowded city centers and there are high rates of HIV, tuberculosis, and malnutrition. The WHO estimates 10 million Africans could be infected by COVID-19 in the next six months. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa is calling for a \$100 billion safety net to provide testing and treatment.

Despite these dire predictions, food insecurity remains the most immediate problem. 1.2 billion people reside on the African continent and 20 percent are already undernourished. Droughts, floods, locusts, and war have greatly contributed to this problem. Lockdowns for public health protection that restrict movement exacerbate food insecurity by increasing the price of food while decreasing access to markets.

As these nations navigate the COVID-19 crisis, they will require the assistance of the international community if they are to also mitigate the worsening crises of food insecurity, hunger, and soon, starvation. §

Protecting Asylum Seekers During COVID-19

Already a vulnerable group, asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border are facing serious additional challenges due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Advocates and social service providers for asylum seekers at the U.S.-Mexico border are raising their voices in a concerted effort to call for the protection of asylum seekers from harm during the coronavirus pandemic. They face pushback from a U.S. government whom many say is using this opportunity to further dismantle the U.S. asylum system and close the U.S. border to immigrants.

On March 21, the Trump administration closed the U.S.-Mexico border to all nonessential travelers, including those seeking asylum, citing public health concerns. Asylum seekers who cross illegally are now being deported within a few hours of apprehension by Border Patrol. Advocates for asylum seekers claim that this is a blatant violation of the right to seek asylum, guaranteed under international and U.S. law. Previous Trump administration policies have significantly curtailed the opportunity to seek asylum in the United States, but this measure nearly precludes it.

The U.S. government justifies these measures on grounds of public health concerns. In response, on March 16, UNHCR, the UN refugee and asylum agency, stated clearly that public health concern during this pandemic is not a valid reason for closing off borders to asylum seekers and refugees, and that doing so remains illegal under international law.

Additionally, a coalition of 27 social service and advocacy organizations sent a letter to the heads of U.S. immigration enforcement agencies explaining why they believe the current policy of forcing asylum seekers to remain in Mexico poses more of a public health risk than would permitting them to enter the United States.

In the letter, sent April 14, these agencies explain that maintaining the current Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) policy, in which those seeking asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border are forced to remain in Mexico while they await their hearings, is a significant public health hazard. They describe how the crowded, unsanitary conditions of the camps in Mexican border towns in which asylum seekers live while they wait put them at high risk of coronavirus infection.

In addition, they explain that asylum seekers are forced to regularly travel between the shelters or camps and ports of entry to the United States to receive updates on their hearings, as the hearings are continuously rescheduled. According to human rights agencies, such travel puts them at risk of harm by gangs as well as coronavirus infection. Hearings for asylum seekers in Mexi-

co are suspended at least until May 1, so asylum seekers will be forced to remain in these camps as the pandemic progresses in Mexico.

The letter calls for the immediate suspension of the MPP policy so that asylum seekers can enter the U.S. and adopt shelter-in-place safety measures either in the homes of relatives or in the community-run migrant shelters which are prepared to receive them. To demonstrate that this could be a real solution, they cite a recent study of the Migrant Protection Protocols policy that indicated that nearly 92 percent of migrants living in the camps had relatives or friends in the U.S. with whom they could stay.

Another concern is the threat of the coronavirus to migrants and asylum seekers in detention centers. The lack of medical capacity and the crowded conditions of detention centers pose a risk to detainees' safety, especially those already vulnerable due to underlying health concerns.

Advocacy and social service groups, as well as Church leaders, have led a vocal campaign to mitigate these risks by releasing detained migrants whenever possible. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, and a coalition of social service providers on the U.S.-Mexico border have all released statements calling for the release of certain migrants from detention, according to specific criteria, such as whether they are non-violent offenders or are asylum seekers who have passed their first asylum interviews. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns has joined other organizations in calling for more funding for alternatives to detention programs, like community-based models and case management, so that there are viable ways for ICE and CBP to release detained immigrants.

As we raise our voices on behalf of asylum seekers during this pandemic, we are inspired by Pope Francis words on how to proceed during this pandemic: "Let us show mercy to those who are most vulnerable, for only in this way will we build a new world." §

Faith in action:

Contact your Members of Congress asking them to provide more funding for alternatives to detention so that migrants can be released from detention, especially during the pandemic: <https://bit.ly/CutDetenCOVID>

Read an article by Maryknoll Lay Missioner Heidi Cerneka, an immigration attorney in El Paso, Texas, about why immigrants in detention must be released at this time: <https://bit.ly/MKLMHeidiCovid>

COVID-19: Importance of Good Governance

Louis Meuleman, a Belgian member of the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration, names several lessons essential to addressing Covid-19 and other potential pandemics this century. The following is an excerpt of Meuleman's article published by the International Institute for Sustainable Development on April 7, 2020.

We are rediscovering the public sector

“The first observation is no big surprise. Countries with a functioning public sector that caters for essential health services for all are better equipped to deal with the pandemic than others who have privatized health care. Market-based health care uses the same strategy as retail companies, namely just-in-time delivery, limited stock and high reliance on logistics. This explains why many hospitals in otherwise well-resourced health systems have no emergency stock of protective clothing and facial masks.”

...“So, the first lesson is about the need to reassert the central role of an effective, responsive and capable public sector in responding to society's needs, building resilience and dealing with crises when they arise.

Effective governance is contextualized

“The second early lesson is about how contextualized effective public governance is. This is also not a big surprise.” ... “Governments need to be sensitive to national values and traditions. As Monika Sie observed in the Dutch newspaper NRC of 20 March 2020, people

in China reacted differently to the virus than in the Netherlands. In the collectivist culture of China, people wear face masks to protect others, while in the individualist Dutch culture, people wear the same masks to project themselves – if they wear them at all.”...

Rapid systemic transformation is possible

“The third lesson is that rapid and unprecedented systemic transformation is possible in each country, provided that a problem is framed – and broadly felt – as a crisis. A disaster requires the acceptance of a command and control style of leadership.” ...

We are at a crossroads

“We cannot afford to have the Covid-19 stimulus funds support an unsustainable future. Taking the wrong decisions now will be worse than causing delays to achieve the SDGs. It could throw our progress years back, or even prevent a sustainable pathway for the foreseeable future.” ...“To conclude, it takes more than markets to bring about sustainable change.” §

Read the rest of Dr. Meuleman's article here:

<https://bit.ly/MarketsCovid>.

A Reflection on Water Amidst a Pandemic

Tania Avila Meneses, an indigenous theologian with the Amerindia Network who works at the Maryknoll Mission Center in Cochabamba, Bolivia, wrote the following reflection for World Water Day 2020.

Today, March 22, is World Water Day. I am reminded of a ritual I shared with my Mapuche sisters and brothers in 2017, a time of drought in Bolivia. That day we were surprised by a heavy rain. We assumed the ritual wouldn't take place, but to our great surprise they told us that it was just the right weather, rain falling in the patio of the house where we gathered, water running across the floor like a river, trees playing with the abundant rain. It was in this setting that we held a trust exercise: total trust in the other – in the midst of uncertainty.

They dress in blacks and blues, adorned with silver jewelry arranged so they amplify the sound of the rain, their handwoven shawls like wings. Together, these create a safe place... a Common Home. The Mapuche, in their ritual, are dancing birds who, with their stillness-movement-pause rhythm, make waters flow. Birds who draw the peace of the wind with wings open to the immensity of the universe and draw the peace of the earth to feet planted lovingly, affirmingly, roots in the wet soil, one with the sound of the rain. They embody vital

blockages, then transform them through dance with an attentive look and precise movements – a powerful simplicity, the combination of peace and movement bestow liberation.

This dance is a synchronicity of bodies in dialogue with the water, land, and air, translating into symbolic language humanity's search for that “je ne sais quoi” that releases the energy of an integral life, like fire in the rain.

Three years later, in the context of great uncertainty, vulnerability, pandemic, I remember the water that unites us as peoples. It makes us human and, paradoxically, with it we create divisions between countries, between rich and poor. This pandemic reminds us that water, the washing of hands, is part of the solution. In this time marked by death, might it not be that we allow the energy of life to flow anew by restoring the dignity of water? By remembering that we are 65 percent water and thus we are not owners of water, but water itself? §

COVID-19 in Peru

This is an abbreviated English translation of a statement on the effect of the pandemic on rural communities from the Civil Association of Human Rights and the Environment (DHUMA), in Puno, Peru. Sr. Patricia Ryan, MM, is president of DHUMA.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has arrived in Peru, a nation marred by the historic evils of exclusion, discrimination, and racism, still unresolved after many centuries. Like in the rest of the world, the most vulnerable populations in Peru are the sectors most impacted and most disregarded, such as campesino (rural indigenous farming) communities. Life in rural areas differs greatly from that in cities, but the authorities who proclaim broad, uniform decisions and policies ignore this... They fail to consider the traditional wisdom of indigenous communities in facing the pandemic or in ensuring the harvest, upon which all life relies.

Since social isolation was mandated in all of Peru, rural communities, like all Peruvians, have complied with the government order, closing off all means of interaction, such as roads and highways connecting communities, in the fear that the virus would arrive in their homes and wreak havoc for their families and for others. This lockdown only allows for one family member to leave the home to buy food, medicine, and other urgent needs. Agricultural and livestock work cannot be done by just one person: it requires the participation of the whole family. Vehicles must transport farmers and carry equipment to bring in the harvest and deliver a given percentage for sale in the cities. The daily life of farming communities is dictated by the rhythms of the laws of nature – of rain, of hail, of wind, of frosts and other natural phenomena...

The earth will not wait for the end of this quarantine. The sale of the harvest, its consumption, and the collection of seeds for the next season is at risk. If campesinos are unable to produce and sell their products now, they will be unable to do so for the rest of the year.

Various ministers have warned that the coming weeks will be the most critical. The government has announced the need to extend quarantine until May 10, leaving open the possibility of further extensions, possibly through June. One worries how much the general public can stand – particularly those living in poverty and extreme poverty. The virus is not the only enemy they must escape; they must also avoid hunger.

In the cities, a large portion of the population works in the informal sector for subsistence-level income and

directly depends on functioning markets and open public spaces. Under quarantine, their work has been halted... These families, the majority of whom come from rural areas, migrated to the cities to pursue this informal labor. With the lockdown order, many have no choice but to leave, resulting in a mass exodus of displaced families returning on foot to their rural communities. This mass mobilization demonstrates the suffering of this most deprived and ignored population.

As food security threatens the survival of the majority who make up the lower economic strata, the demand for an economic subsidy to cover their needs has not been met by authorities.

In addition, the Peruvian health system finds itself at a tipping point. In cities with the most confirmed cases of infection, medical facilities are on the brink of collapse. The infrastructure of hospitals and clinics is insufficient and medical personnel are unprotected and unprepared to receive a massive influx of infected patients with the efficient help and attention they need. There is also a lack of testing, not only in rural areas but in the entire Puno region.

It is worth noting that private extractive industry remains outside the confines of the lockdown, as the work of mining corporations is considered an “indispensable activity” that cannot be suspended. Mining companies have stated that they are taking measures to ensure the safety of their workers, but in recent days the Ministry of Health has reported cases of miners infected with COVID-19, indicating danger not only for workers but for their families and communities as well. Extractive industry is one of the most environmentally destructive sectors, causing damage to the air and, most notably, water. The indifference of those in power is a slap in the face to the vast majority of ordinary Peruvians.

Now more than ever, the words of the Holy Father in his encyclical *Laudato Si'* ring true, when he declares, “Today... we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.” (*Laudato Si'*, 49).

Read the original statement in Spanish here:
<https://bit.ly/dhumapuno> §



Brazil and the Coronavirus

The Brazilian government has been slow to respond to the coronavirus pandemic on the federal level, but local governments and community organizations are working hard to care for vulnerable people.

There are striking similarities in the responses to the COVID-19 crisis by the U.S. and Brazilian federal governments. Both have focused their responses on measures meant to contain the spread of the virus and to provide for workers' lost wages. Much more is being done by local governments and community organizations to help vulnerable people through the crisis.

President Jair Bolsonaro, a supporter and ally of President Trump, has repeated many of President Trump's early statements regarding the virus, including comparing the health effects of the virus to that of the common cold and emphasizing the potential of chloroquine as a possible treatment. The right-wing populist has also emphasized that "the cure cannot be worse than the disease" and has urged for the rapid reopening of the economy.

Like in the United States, the management of the virus has become highly politicized, with supporters of the president calling for an immediate end to quarantine and a re-opening of the economy while others insist on stronger social isolation measures. Brazilian society has reacted with state and local governments and community organizations taking the lead in responding to the virus, implementing a variety of measures, including quarantines.

On March 22, President Bolsonaro published his first presidential decree related to the virus, the most controversial being a measure allowing businesses to suspend employee salaries for four months without any financial support for workers. After an uproar from around the country, he removed this measure and later proposed a one-time payment of R\$200 (U.S. \$40) for informal workers. The Brazilian Congress later increased that to three monthly payments of R\$600 (U.S. \$120) which have been delivered to many workers. However, some have slipped through the cracks of the government system, resulting in long lines of people waiting at banks, hoping to get their names on the list to receive the benefits.

President Bolsonaro's concern about the cure not being worse than the virus is somewhat valid given the impossibility of social distancing for many Brazilians due to poverty, crowding, and poor sanitation. Millions of people have no savings, as they live on what they make each day. Many live in cramped homes, with sometimes ten people sharing a one-bedroom house. Forcing people to stay inside in such conditions could

be considered cruel, especially as domestic violence and suicide rates have increased in places with quarantines.

With the lack of federal action, local communities have stepped in to fill the void. Soon after authorities in Rio de Janeiro confirmed the first death from COVID-19 – a 63-year-old domestic worker who caught the virus from her employers who had recently returned from Italy – gangs shut down tourism of the city's crowded slums known as favelas and initiated limited curfews. Community associations formed teams of volunteers to monitor families block-by-block, helping families that need food, medical care, and hygiene products as well as sharing general information about the virus.

The Landless Workers Movement (MST), a group working for land reform, has provided hundreds of tons of food to urban and rural communities in need and has begun producing soap and 70 percent alcohol for hospitals, while teams of tailors and seamstresses sew masks for donation. The movement has also offered its schools and other larger buildings for use as overflow hospitals where needed.

The indigenous population, numbering about 800,000, faces additional threats, as many communities have limited contact with the outside world, making them more vulnerable to infection. They also often live hundreds of miles from adequate healthcare facilities. Indeed, Manaus, the city in the center of the Amazon, is already the largest virus "hotspot" in Brazil, with the highest per capita rate of infection and more than 90 percent of ICU beds already in use.

Since Bolsonaro's election, there have been more and increasingly violent invasions of indigenous lands, as the president has often spoken of the need to open up indigenous lands for "development" by mining, logging and agribusiness interests.

In response to fears of the virus, some indigenous communities in the Amazon region are splitting into smaller groups and retreating into their territories, a strategy that has allowed them to survive extinction during past epidemics of the flu and measles, brought by Europeans. §

Faith in action: Read and share our statement in solidarity with Amazonian indigenous peoples facing the novel coronavirus:

<https://bit.ly/AmazonCOVIDprotect>

Resources

1. Learn more about the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 by exploring the educational resources of the **SDG Academy**, including short courses: <https://sdgacademy.org/about-us/>
2. From ICAN, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, read about the **tradeoffs of governmental spending on nuclear weapons** instead of healthcare during this pandemic: https://www.icanw.org/healthcare_costs
3. Find updates on how refugees and asylum seekers can get access to aid through the **recent federal stimulus bills** in response to the coronavirus crisis: <https://bit.ly/COVIDLegislativeAnalysis>
4. The Latin America Working Group (LAWG) and partners are putting together resources with information about COVID-19 for those who speak **indigenous languages** (neither Spanish nor English), including audio, video and print materials: <https://bit.ly/COVID-19Recursos>
5. Explore this teaching tool by the Latin America Working Group (LAWG) about how **corruption fuels forced migration**, and how the international community must act against corruption: <https://bit.ly/LAWGCorruption>
6. Read a pastoral letter by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference on the **40th anniversary of the founding of the modern nation of Zimbabwe**. The Bishops call for the government to prioritize the welfare of the majority and the poor: <https://bit.ly/ZimBishops40>
7. Read a new report from Alliance for Peacebuilding: "Getting From Here to There: Successful Implementation of the Global Fragility Act." The report focuses on a newly passed piece of legislation, **The Global Fragility Act**," which means to prevent systemic violence in fragile nations: <https://bit.ly/GlbFragActAP>
8. Read Pax Christi International's statement in support of the call for a **global ceasefire** during the novel coronavirus pandemic: <https://bit.ly/PaxChristiGlobCease>
9. Read a letter from Jubilee USA Network, and signed by our office, to the IMF, G20, and the White House calling for **debt relief and cancellation** for impoverished nations fighting the coronavirus pandemic. <https://bit.ly/LtrJubileeWHG20IMF>
10. Explore resources for the **5th anniversary of Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'*** from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: <https://bit.ly/LS50USCCB>. These include graphics which help Catholics understand the connections between life issues and the call to care for creation: <https://bit.ly/LSPostcardHumanDignity>
11. **Fr. Rick Bauer, MM**, contributed to a World Health Organization document, "Practical considerations and recommendations for religious leaders and faith-based communities in the context of COVID-19": <https://bit.ly/BauerWHO>
12. Check out a briefing paper and join a campaign by ICAN to promote divestment by major companies from the production of **nuclear weapons**: https://www.icanw.org/divestment_and_nuclear_weapons
13. Read a statement signed by Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and many other organizations calling for international action to help protect the **indigenous peoples of the Amazon** from a COVID-19 outbreak: <https://bit.ly/AmazonCOVIDprotect>
14. In case your homeschooling needs a little enrichment: UN Environment Program & TEDEd have teamed up to create **Earth School**, 30 days of on-line lessons on the environment and how we live in it: <https://ed.ted.com/earth-school>
15. Read this statement by **Churches for Middle East Peace** in support of the Holy Father's call for a global ceasefire: <https://bit.ly/GlbCeaseCMEP>
16. The Advocacy Network for Africa has put forth a statement calling on the international community to take certain steps to help **African nations combat the COVID-19 pandemic**: <https://bit.ly/ADNACovid>
17. Read articles on how COVID-19 is changing the landscape of **nonviolent social movements** around the globe from the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict: <https://bit.ly/ICNCblog>