



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

# NewsNotes

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

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## A century of commitment

During the coming two years, the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers and the Maryknoll Sisters will celebrate their centennials, in 2011 and 2012 respectively – one hundred years of commitment to mission and to each of the key elements of mission: presence and witness; human promotion and liberation; liturgical life, prayer and contemplation; interreligious dialogue; proclamation and catechesis.

One important expression of the Maryknoll commitment to integral evangelization emerged in specific ways during the early 1970s and has been a permanent, visible dimension of Maryknoll ministry since: work for social justice and peace, for “human promotion and liberation” – ultimately for the integrity of creation. In a substantial and effective manner, this key facet of evangelization has been woven into the fabric of Maryknoll mission activity in local communities around the world, as well as in centers of political and economic power.



The founders of the Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers, Bishop James Walsh and Fr. Thomas Price (top and middle) and the founder of the Maryknoll Sisters, Mother Mary Joseph Rogers (bottom).

Shortly after the 1971 Synod document *Justice in the World* called “action for justice and participation in the transformation of the world” a “constitutive dimension of the preaching the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation,” Maryknoll established the Maryknoll Sisters’ Office for Social Concerns and the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers’ Justice and Peace Office. Eventually joined to become the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, this Maryknoll ministry (ultimately including the Maryknoll Lay Missioners) brought the experience, perspectives and voices of the communities where Maryknollers served into the process of shaping opinion and public policy of the U.S. and other countries, as well as of multilateral entities, including

the UN, the World Bank and the IMF.

At about the same time, Maryknoll joined others to develop and refine shareholder mechanisms for promoting corporate social and environmental responsibility through the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility.

And Maryknoll social communications – magazines, videos, radio programs, educational resources and Orbis Books, always important vehicles for Maryknoll missionary work – became known worldwide for a deep commitment to human promotion and liberation.

More recently, new insights have greatly expanded this Maryknoll engagement with the work for social justice, human liberation and peace to include a commitment to ecological integrity. Shaped by the vision of Maryknoll Sisters and others conscious of humans as part of and dependent on the earth community, it is affected by Maryknoll experience with indigenous communities around the world and by deep theological reflection on recent scientific discoveries about the essence of the natural world.

In the beginning of their centennial year, as they reflect on a “new springtime for mission,” the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers articulate again this commitment:

*We join the struggles for justice  
of the poor, indigenous peoples, women and  
children against economic, social and  
cultural oppression.*

*Through a commitment to inculturation  
and an option for the poor  
we search for new ways to be  
the Church in service of God’s Reign.*

*Everywhere we are touched  
by the triumph of the human spirit  
and enriched by encountering people’s  
faith experience.*

*We join with them announcing the healing,  
reconciling and liberating Jesus.*

*With reverence for God’s creation,  
we also join efforts to protect  
the integrity and sustainability  
of the Earth.*

In each issue of *Maryknoll NewsNotes* this year, we will explore a particular dimension of Maryknoll’s long-term commitment to social justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

# Latin America: Wikileaks revelations, part 1

*While most press coverage of the U.S. State Department cables revealed by the website Wikileaks has centered on the Middle East, a number of cables have been from and about Latin American countries. Information contained in some messages confirmed suspicions about political leaders, providing new details. Others have brought new information showing internal contradictions in the policies of the U.S. and other governments. Cables from countries considered to be “oppositional” like Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua, show how embassies often use biased information from untrustworthy sources. So far, though, the cables leaked are unlikely to cause any major diplomatic problems in the Americas.*

**Bolivia:** Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera has publicly supported the Wikileaks organization and posted all U.S. diplomatic cables released that pertain to Bolivia on his official website. He said that he wants people to know the “barbarities and insults” of what he called Washington’s “interventionist infiltration.” The released documents show the biased view of Bolivian reality held by many embassy staff as well as their paternalistic attitude toward indigenous Bolivians. A January 23, 2009 cable gave an analysis of the political situation leading up to the referendum on the new Constitution, saying most of the support for the document came from “disinterest, blind faith in [President] Evo Morales’ political project, and illiteracy.” The cable makes no reference to the fact that the Constitution was a response to the long term demands from the same supporters that the cable disparages.

Many of the cited sources are conservative, often opposition forces, whose views are repeated without counterbalance. For example, one cable about supposed election fraud by Morales’ political party, Movement for Socialism (MAS), uses the Santa Cruz Civic Committee, the central opposition force at the time, as a source. In contrast, international observer organizations like the Organization of American States, the United Nations and the Carter Center approved of the elections without reservations.

A description of an attack on indigenous protestors in the Pando department also shows bias in the embassy’s information. A cable quotes a redacted source who claimed that the MAS set up the assault in order to arrest local political leaders and win the vote in that department. This claim had no basis in

fact and should not have been repeated by the embassy as a legitimate analysis of the situation.

**Brazil:** Other than confirming the Brazilian government’s extreme concern over control of the Amazon and the U.S. diplomatic corps’ almost fawning admiration for the country, documents leaked by Wikileaks have brought little new information. One interesting exception is documents showing internal division in the Brazilian government in relation to Venezuela. While President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva refused to go along with U.S. requests to help isolate Venezuela, one cable shows that the Lula administration offered to support Su’mate, a Venezuelan NGO working in opposition to Venezuela’s president Hugo Chavez, in exchange for U.S. authorization to sell a Brazilian training aircraft, the “Supertucano,” to other South American countries.

Like Bolivian Vice President Garcia, Lula has also spoken out in defense of Wikileaks: “The guilty person is not the one who did the reporting, but the person who wrote silly things.”

**Chile:** Cables from Chile show that relations with the indigenous Mapuche people were an important and difficult issue for President Michelle Bachelet’s administration. Some cables show that the Chilean government asked for help from the U.S. to investigate whether the Mapuches were receiving funding from “foreign terrorist groups and/or Venezuela.”

Another cable shows that, in contrast to the embassy in Bolivia, the U.S. embassy in Chile distinguishes between biased and non-biased sources of information. “Despite sensationalist press coverage and a popular image of bloody conflict in [the] Mapuche heartland, [policy officers] found that relations between indigenous and non-indigenous communities were largely nonviolent, if often tense and distrustful,” stated one official in a leaked cable.

**Colombia:** Leaked cables from Colombia are an example of diplomatic actions that are perhaps better to be kept secret. The documents show that former president Alvaro Uribe secretly sought to dialog with leadership of Colombia’s rebel forces, the FARC. This contradicts his public statements that he would never negotiate with them until they stopped kidnapping civilians, freed all of their captives and stop laying land mines. Various cables make reference

to attempts to meet with FARC leaders, sometimes through the mediation of Switzerland. One cable also shows that U.S. embassy officials met with Pablo Catatumbo, a member of the FARC's seven-person command. Governments should be able to hold secret meetings with adversaries if this is the only way to obtain such a connection. By leaking these documents, Wikileaks and other news outlets may cause set backs in important negotiations.

**El Salvador:** Leaked cables from the San Salvador embassy confirm and provide more detail about how President Mauricio Funes faces increasing division and even subterfuge from his own political party, the Farabundi National Liberation Front (FMLN). Funes' decision to distance himself from more progressive leaders and focus on relations with Brazil has disappointed some FMLN members who were hoping for more significant engagement with the eight Latin American and Caribbean countries who comprise the ALBA coalition.

This led one U.S. embassy official to describe the Funes government as "schizophrenic." Further quoting that cable, "The part of the government Funes controls is moderate, pragmatic, responsibly left-of-center and friendly to the (U.S. government)... The part he has ceded to hard-line elements of the [FMLN] is seeking to carry out the Bolivarian Chavista game-plan, including implacable hostility toward the [U.S. government.]"

One message says that Funes "suspects hard-line FMLN elements are intercepting Funes' and his inner circle's telephone calls" while another blames these same FMLN members as being behind street protests against a hydroelectric dam. The U.S. Embassy warned that "if things continue to deteriorate, we could see an open break between the two sides" ahead of legislative elections scheduled for 2012.

**Guatemala:** Only one cable from the U.S. embassy in Guatemala was released; it deals with first lady Sandra Torres de Colom's intentions to run for president in 2011. This was not breaking news, but the cable's analysis of her "abrasive personality" being difficult for the country's "male-dominated society" to accept didn't win any friends for the embassy.

In a cable from Mexico, U.S. diplomats describe the situation at the Mexico-Guatemala border as "dramatic" with little police presence and high levels of drug and arms trafficking.

**Honduras:** A cable sent a month after the coup that unseated President Manuel Zelaya shows how the U.S. embassy had no doubt about the illegitimacy of the coup despite State Department reluctance to act on that fact. The July 24 message, titled "Open and shut: The case of the Honduran coup" and signed by Ambassador Hugo Llorens, states clearly that the coup was unlawful. From the cable: "[T]here is no doubt that the military, Supreme Court and National Congress conspired on June 28 in what constituted an illegal and unconstitutional coup ..., while accepting that there may be a prima facie case that Zelaya may have committed illegalities and may have even violated the constitution. There is equally no doubt from our perspective that Roberto Micheletti's assumption of power was illegitimate."

After listing the principal arguments of coup supporters, the cable states, "In our view, none of the above arguments has any substantive validity under the Honduran constitution. Some are outright false. Others are mere supposition or ex-post rationalizations of a patently illegal act."

Despite this clear analysis, the State Department refused to acknowledge the coup and to impose required sanctions. A month after receiving this report, the State Department still had not cut off assistance to Honduras as is required by law, by creating a technicality over whether it was a "military coup" or not. The Obama administration continues to support Micheletti's illegal government.

**Mexico:** Released cables from Mexico show that, despite public praise from U.S. officials toward Mexican police and military, they have great concern that the poorly trained and corrupt security forces are unable to deal with drug cartels.

Confirming the worries of many human rights organizations about the inappropriate use of military personnel for police work, one memo says that the Mexican army "has taken a serious beating on human rights issues from international and domestic human rights organizations, who argue with considerable basis, in fact, that the military is ill-equipped for a domestic policing role."

The cables paint a fairly bleak picture of the police situation, citing more than just a lack of coordination between security forces or with prosecutors, but actual competition between them so that "one agency's success is viewed as another's failure, information is closely guarded, and joint operations are all but unheard of..."

## Haiti: Compassionate, hope-filled connections

*Maryknoll Affiliate Renate Schneider coordinates Haitian Connection (Koneksyon Ayiti), which was established as a compassionate response to the poverty and misery that so many Haitians face. As Haiti approaches the first anniversary of the devastating January 12, 2010 earthquake and struggles to set its political future on a positive course, it is important to remember and recognize good work that continues there, including three Haitian Connection projects:*

**Houses for Haitian Women:** It is believed that over three million people were affected by the recent earthquake in Haiti, leaving thousands of Haitian people without homes, many of them women who are single parents and heads of households. Kay Pou Fanm Ayisyen is a project of Haitian Connection in partnership with women's groups in Jeremie and Fondwa. The Jeremie area had to accommodate 80,000 earthquake refugees, many of them women and children. Fondwa was 80 percent destroyed by the earthquake. Studies have shown that women, who own their own homes in Haiti, are better able to maintain their own small businesses, and feed, clothe and educate their children.

**Mental Health Program in Jeremie:** The catastrophe which hit Haiti and the subsequent migration from Port-au-Prince to the rural areas underscore the need for trained mental health counselors on the ground as people resettle, tally their losses and adjust to a new and likely much more difficult reality. Psychological relief aid cannot be done in the same way as other disaster relief. It requires a consistent and long-term presence on the ground. As a result Haitian Connection is committed to training local people in trauma and grief intervention.

Haitian Connection will train teachers and orphanage personnel in Child-to-Child (CtC) methodology which has been adapted to help children assist other children to cope with traumatic situations. A CtC publication on children affected by natural disasters outlines specific activities that children can do to help other children, including engaging younger children in games, songs, storytelling, and dancing.

**University of the Nouvelle Grand'Anse:** After the earthquake, Haiti's best universities were wrecked, their campuses a jumble of collapsed concrete, mangled desks and chairs, and buried coursework. Hundreds of professors and students were

entombed, although the exact number of dead is complicated by the fact that class lists and computer registries were also wiped out by the quake.

This obliteration of higher education will have long-term impact on Haiti, unless the capacity for high education is rebuilt not only in Port-au-Prince, but also in the provinces. Having viable educational institutions in the provinces will keep young people in the countryside, strengthen the communities which host them, and can provide non-student groups with continuing education. In addition it will create jobs and can lift up a whole community.

It is imperative for Haiti to invest in the next generation, creating a critical mass of people to run the country, so Haiti in the future will not have to rely on outside experts. With this in mind, Haitian Connection has proposed strengthening the Université de la Nouvelle Grand'Anse through the institution of a General Studies curriculum.

The Université is located five kilometers outside the city limits of Jeremie, the seat of the Grand'Anse department. Its infrastructure is in place with two main classroom buildings; a large assembly hall/cafeteria, offices, internet and electricity access as well as a medical clinic and an agricultural infrastructure (chicken coop, pig husbandry, and available irrigation, as well as demonstration plots for farming).

The university has currently two programs, one in agriculture and the other in administration/management. The school can be called a technical school or a community college. Unfortunately it does not have a stable staff, and its educational level fluctuates quite a bit. Therefore the proposal to institute a year of General Studies before the students embark on their specialization.

The purpose of the year of General Studies is to introduce students to a broad range of human knowledge and intellectual pursuits, to equip them with the analytic and expressive skills required to engage in those pursuits, to develop their ability to think critically, and to prepare them for life-long learning. This curriculum provides students with the intellectual, ethical and aesthetical foundation necessary to make informed choices, foster a creative spirit and a sense of service to their country and their communities.

For more information, check the Haitian Connection website, [www.haitianconnection.org](http://www.haitianconnection.org).

## Nicaragua: Opinions vary widely on Sandinistas

*Like most of the more progressive governments elected in Latin America in the last 10 years, opinions vary widely on the performance of Daniel Ortega's Sandinista government in Nicaragua. Elected in November 2006 (after having served as president in the late 1980s), Ortega is praised by some due to effective social programs that have improved the lives of some of the poorest Nicaraguans. At the same time, many from both the political right and left vilify him as a corrupt and ineffective dictator.*

Since assuming power, Ortega's government have brought significant advances in areas of education, health, and economic inequality. The first action by the new government was to eliminate school fees, making education a right for all citizens. Children whose families could not afford to put them in school were able to attend. Tens of thousands of children under six years old also now have access to preschool and one free meal per day. The result of these and other initiatives, such as a literacy program based on Cuba's successful "Si se puede," was that from January 2007 to 2010, Nicaragua's illiteracy rate dropped by 85 percent – from 22 percent to 3.3 percent of the population – prompting the UN to declare Nicaragua the fourth Latin American country to be free of illiteracy.

The government's flagship program, Zero Hunger, is addressing poverty by distributing one cow, one pig, 10 hens, and a rooster to impoverished rural families, along with technical assistance to best use these resources. Since 2007 Zero Hunger has benefitted 70,000 families, 16,000 of them in 2010. The benefits are granted in the name of the woman in the household, as women are more likely to spread the profits to the whole family.

The government has greatly increased access to health care, especially for the poorest Nicaraguans, augmenting the number of medical consultations nationwide by 68 percent. This has resulted in a 24 percent reduction in the maternal mortality rate, a one-third decrease in overall mortality and a remarkable 75 percent reduction in cases of malaria.

In the same three years, they reduced the percentage of Nicaraguans who are malnourished from 27 percent to 22 percent, earning praise from the United Nations, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). Nicaragua will

also be the first developing country to vaccinate its children against pneumonia, the cause of 20 percent of infant mortality in the country.

Sewage treatment has dramatically increased as well as electricity generation, minimizing the number of power outages that had been plaguing the country for a number of years. Nicaragua was also recognized by the United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) as the country that has most reduced economic inequality in the region, at a time when a number of countries are also realizing historic advances in this area.

Even with these notable advances, Ortega's presidency has not been without controversy. Conservatives have complained about Ortega's close relations with Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez and the ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the People of Our America) community, a trade collective of eight Latin American and Caribbean countries with progressive governments. In a deal with Venezuela, Nicaragua pays 60 percent of the cost of oil up front with the remainder being financed with a low interest loan. Profits from the sale of the 40 percent of oil go into a fund for many of the social programs described above. Many have challenged the transparency of this fund complaining that it has turned into a slush fund that Ortega can use with no oversight.

Many on the left complain of Nicaragua's continued dependence on the International Monetary Fund and its austerity programs as well as the Sandinistas' repression of protests. The alliances that Ortega formed in order to be elected are also a central point of contention. In order to win the election in 2006, Ortega made a number of political agreements that upset many traditional supporters of the Sandinistas. In addition to continuing a 2001 pact with Arnoldo Aleman, Nicaragua's conservative former president (1997-2001), he chose a former Contra leader, Jaime Morales, as his vice president. Ortega supported a full ban on abortion including in cases when the mother's life is in danger, a move that has provoked ire from women's organizations around the region. Even with these concessions, Ortega won the presidency with just 37.9 percent of the votes.

Municipal elections in November 2008 brought widespread condemnation due to signs of fraud. The Ortega government barred international observers' access to polls, though Transparency International's Nicaraguan national chapter recorded irregularities

in 32 percent of polling places. The European Community and the U.S. suspended funding to Nicaragua in response to the apparent fraud and violent repression of resulting protests. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Sandinistas did well in the election, claiming to win in 100 of 146 municipalities.

Controversy around Ortega will continue to stir in 2011 as he prepares to run for re-election in November even though the Nicaraguan Constitution prohibits consecutive presidential mandates and allows for a maximum of two terms for any president. Unable to get an exception to that rule from Congress, Ortega turned to a division of the Supreme

Court dominated by Sandinista judges who ruled in October 2010 that the law did not apply to him. This decision must still be approved by the highest division of the Court. Meanwhile the Ortega government is working to get the Congress to strip the re-election ban from the Constitution. These moves have concerned many including Ortega's own vice president who has said that he will step down in protest if Ortega is re-elected. While the Ortega government has been able to accomplish real improvements in people's lives, it is unlikely to be enough to compensate for its questionable commitment to democracy.

## Kenya: Anti-trafficking law

*Counter-trafficking specialists say a law recently passed in Kenya which, for the first time, legally defines and recognizes trafficking in persons as a crime, will help protect the vulnerable and assist survivors, while serving as a deterrent to perpetrators. President Mwai Kibaki signed the legislation into law in October. Conviction carries a 30-year jail term or a US\$370,000 fine. (IRIN, Dec. 8)*

"This legislation represents a significant new tool for Kenya in counter-trafficking law enforcement," Tal Raviv, International Organization for Migration (IOM), said in a statement.

Claris Ogangah Onyango, deputy director of the Federation of Women Lawyers, told IRIN: "It will now be possible to institute proper charges, sustain successful cases and obtain deterrent sentences [for] all those involved in the practice."

Tony Odera, a lawyer at CRADLE, an NGO that works on children's issues through legal representation, said many cases had been reported in the past but lack of a clear definition of trafficking had made prosecuting suspects complex. "The new law will provide a comprehensive legal framework that would address issues pertaining to human trafficking," Odera said.

Previously, trafficking offences fell under a variety of legal statutes: the penal code, children's act and sexual offences act.

Some poor parents and older persons are said to have forced children into prostitution. CRADLE estimates that about 1,500 minors frequent "sex spots" at the Kenyan coast.

In northern Kenya, conflict and drought have

made the area fertile ground for those seeking cheap labor, young wives, even cattle raiders. Ahmed Set of the Islamic Foundation told IRIN, "It is good that we [now] have a harsh way of punishing those people who ferry young children from remote parts of the region to work as herders [or] maids."

According to a June trafficking in persons report by the U.S. State Department, Kenyans voluntarily migrate to the Middle East, other East African nations and Europe in search of jobs, where they are exploited in domestic servitude, massage parlors and brothels, and are forced to do manual labor, including in the construction industry. Chinese, Indian, and Pakistani women also reportedly go through Nairobi en route to work in Europe's sex trade.

Most of those trafficked are lured by bogus recruitment agents. Fake newspaper and internet advertisements, false marriage proposals and deception by friends and relatives are used in internal trafficking for purposes of domestic or sex work, Alice Kimani, IOM's counter-trafficking project officer, told IRIN. She said, "The lack of funding for research on the magnitude, the hidden and clandestine nature of this crime and the fact that it is only in the recent years that people have begun to understand the issue has made it difficult to document the crime, in addition to the fact that there are still no reporting mechanisms that have been set up, and lastly not all victims seek assistance so there is no way of knowing how many are actually trafficked."

IOM has assisted the Kenya Association of Private Employment Agencies (KAPEA) in developing a recruitment code of conduct to prevent trafficking.



## Zimbabwe: Political crisis far from solved

*Zimbabwe ranks at the bottom of the UN Human Development Index, along with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Niger, Burundi and Mozambique. Corruption and exploitation have made a small group in Zimbabwe wealthy, but the middle class has disappeared. People have either become poor or they are working in other countries, including Namibia and Botswana, in order to send money home. Many lack basics – food, clean water, school fees, clinic fees and transportation – while the political crisis, which came to a head following elections in 2008, is far from solved. The following article was written by Maryknoll Sister Josephine Lucker, who lived and worked in Zimbabwe from 1987-94.*

2011 promises to be especially significant in the history of Zimbabwe. For 30 years, Robert Mugabe, who will be 87 years old this year, has been Zimbabwe's president. Following failed elections in 2008, when Mugabe's party, ZANU-PF, lost its parliamentary majority for the first time since independence, presidential hopeful Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), pulled out of a run-off election to protest brutal violence against opposition candidates and their supporters. A Global Political Agreement was negotiated in September 2008 and took effect on February 11, 2009, forming the Government of National Unity (GNU) between ZANU-PF and MDC to promote reconciliation and calm the spiral of political violence and economic chaos that had engulfed the country.

Increased tension between ZANU-PF and MDC is evident. Mugabe has been accused of breaking the power-sharing deal. Recently, for example, Prime Minister Tsvangirai filed a lawsuit against Mugabe for violating the Constitution by the unilateral appointment of 10 provincial governors.

Though no dates have yet been set, Mugabe's political party, ZANU-PF, seems to be pushing for early elections, provoking protest from many civil society organizations worried that elections would bring a repeat of the violence that followed the 2008 elections because the GNU has yet to accomplish intended reforms or create a spirit of political tolerance in the country. Some signs of voter intimidation are already on the horizon and questions are being raised about whether the people of Zimbabwe will have sufficient access to independent information about candidates and their positions, given that the state-controlled

media, particularly the radio, is the major means of information for the vast majority of Zimbabweans.

It is also probable that Zimbabwe will vote on a new constitution this year. The same questions are asked about whether people will have access to sufficient independent information about the proposed constitution and whether they have had enough time to question and discuss it without intimidation.

Jestina Mukoko, a keynote speaker at the 2010 Amnesty International Northeast Regional Conference held in Boston on November 13, was a television broadcaster in Zimbabwe before becoming national director of the Zimbabwe Peace Project, which documents human rights abuses in the country. She was abducted by security agents in Zimbabwe in December 2008. Tortured and held in isolation, she was finally released after three months in response to international pressure.

Mukoko summed up her forced isolation in this way: "They hurt me physically; they hurt me mentally; they threatened me with death ... but they did not break my spirit... Having spent my prime years as a state broadcaster, the same people I worked for...who would have known me as an individual, were the [ones] ... who were labeling me as a terrorist. I would think out of professionalism and ethics in journalism, they could have taken time to come and to speak to me and get my side of the story [but] that never happened ... Strings are being [pulled] ... from some remote place not within the broadcasting authority itself... I never got the right of reply [from] the state-run media agencies. We need ...an alternative voice, especially in terms of radio.

"The Zimbabwe Peace Project was founded in the year 2000. We want to end impunity, because it stifles the ability of citizens to be able to choose leaders freely. When there is violence people are not able to vote freely ... or when you have to have a 'politically correct' party card in order to qualify to get food, medicine etc. We have to be very careful, but when we analyze trends and patterns of violence ... we can anticipate somewhat ... and so be able to shape a more just future."

Despite cries for help from Zimbabweans, who stood firmly with the people of South Africa and Mozambique during their struggles for liberation, and despite growing fears about increased violence and repression, South African Development Conference (SADC) and Organization of African Unity (OAU)

leaders seem unable and unwilling to bring political pressure for justice and peace in Zimbabwe. In fact, adding to the pressure in Zimbabwe, South Africa recently revoked the visas of approximately 2.5 million Zimbabweans who have been living in South

Africa because of the political violence and extreme economic hardships at home. Events in Zimbabwe in the coming months will require new levels of attention and solidarity from Africans and from the wider international community.

## Sudan: Listening to women's voices

*The Sudanese Women Empowerment for Peace (SuWEP) is a network of women's groups from all over Sudan. It includes many brave women who have risked their lives speaking the truth to power and who played a crucial role in peace building during and after the war between North and South. Members of SuWEP met in Khartoum on December 12-13, 2010 to discuss issues that affect women in the pre-, during and post-referendum periods. Their statement following this meeting is printed here. In the aftermath of the January 9 referendum, which will decide the future of Sudan, it is important to listen with care to Sudanese voices.*

AWARE of the gains women of the Sudan have made during the last post conflict (CPA) period;

MINDFUL of the women issues and rights in the current political set up and structures of administration in the Sudan;

CONCERNED of the current political dispensation and the imminent transition affecting the geopolitical set up of the Sudan;

DEEPLY CONCERNED about the challenges women of the Sudan are and will face in the wake of the changes about to occur;

CONSCIOUS of the sensitivity and the nature of the issues that are affecting the women on citizenship and rights of the women;

CONCERNED about the impact of and the consequences of the transition and the possible new political arrangements in the Sudan;

AWARE of the roles we as women of SUWEP played in the peace processes in the Sudan;

PURSUANT of our commitment and search as SUWEP for peace and peaceful co-existence irrespective of the outcome of the referendum;

DO HEREBY:

- Urge both governments to ensure fair, free, transparent and secure conduct of the referendum and stop any acts of violence during the processes
- Call upon the Sudan Referendum Commission to ensure a smooth, nonviolent fair and trans-

parent and properly managed process.

- Urge both governments to address all issues related to the referendum itself such as resources, citizenship, education and borders.
- Appeal to the parties concerned to respect the outcome of the referendum, embrace peace and resist any call to return to war.
- Call for formation of post referendum governance structures that are democratic, inclusive, participatory and promote respect for human rights especially women's and children's rights
- Appeal to both governments in the North and the South to implement policies and strategies that will address issues of injustice, poverty and marginalization and the full attainment of the Millennium Development Goals
- Urge the two governments to develop the Countries' plan of action to implement UNSCR 1325, 1820 on Women, Peace and Security to ensure the Protection, Promotion Prevention and Participation of women.
- Call upon the two governments to ratify the African Protocol on the rights of women.

WE as SuWEP group both in the North and South, commit ourselves:

- To work together irrespective of the outcome of the referendum.
- To work towards a free, fair, transparent and non-violent referendum.
- To work to promote sustainable peace, democracy, human rights, justice, gender equality and development in the country(s).
- To conduct awareness programs to the masses to understand and accept the referendum results.
- To offer support in form of legal aid, healing and psychological support through an outreach program to the women in prisons, abused and discriminated against.
- To lobby the two governments for laws that will facilitate freedom of movement, work and access to basic facilities including rights to ownership of land and properties.

## Asia: Human rights protection enacted

*In December, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance entered into force when Iraq became the 20th country to ratify the document. The Convention is a legally-binding instrument protecting people from enforced disappearances and establishing the right of everyone not to be subjected to this crime. It provides that enforced disappearance constitutes an international crime and, when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack, is considered a crime against humanity. The following article is from the Asia Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD).*

Despite the voluntary pledge of the Philippine government before the UN Human Rights Council in 2007 [to sign the document], the Philippines is neither among the signatories nor the States Parties. The Convention is particularly relevant to the Philippine situation, where, since the dark years of the Marcos regime, enforced disappearances remain unresolved and continue to occur.

[More than 300] cases were reported to the Families of Victims of Involuntary Disappearance (FIND) while 209 cases had been documented by Karapatan during the administration of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Three new cases have been documented and another one reported to FIND under the present Aquino administration. These are not mere numbers, but they encompass the violation of multiple human rights of the disappeared, of his or her family and, ultimately, of the society as a whole.

According to the Convention, each State Party shall codify enforced disappearance as an autonomous offense under its criminal law and punish it by appropriate penalties which take into account its extreme seriousness. However, in the Philippines, as in any other Asian country, there is no domestic law criminalizing all instances of enforced disappearance. ...

The Convention is the UN's response to a global phenomenon, which, according to the 2009 report of the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappear-

ances, occurs in 100 countries of the world, 27 of which are Asian. Asia is the continent from which the highest number of cases was reported to the said Working Group.

The imperative of the Convention's ratification by as many States as possible and its universal implementation can be gleaned, among others, from the sad reality that the AFAD continues to learn from its member-organizations in other Asian countries.

... In Timor Leste, the 24-year occupation [by] Indonesia resulted in untold violations of human rights, including enforced disappearance. In Indonesia, the 1965 massacre against members of the Communist Party of Indonesia, labelled as enemies of the state, resulted in the victimization of many civilians. Further, more people were victimized by enforced disappearance during and immediately after the fall of the 32 years of the Suharto dictatorship. In Nepal, the 10-year internal conflict left 10,000 disappeared. ... In Thailand, while cases of disappearances in 1992 remain unresolved, recent cases occurred especially in the south, including that of human rights lawyer Somchai Neelaphaijit.

In all the mentioned countries, relatives of the disappeared continue to suffer and, at the same time, to struggle to establish the truth, to obtain justice and redress and to reconstruct the historical memory of their beloved desaparecidos. This dark phenomenon of disappearances urges states to provide protection to all persons from this heinous crime by signing and ratifying the Convention.

As AFAD celebrates this especially glorious day in the struggle against enforced disappearance through the entry into force of the Convention, it joins the International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances (ICAED) to call for more signatures and ratifications from governments of Asia and of the rest of the world.

The AFAD, being based in the Philippines, especially calls on the administration of President Benigno Aquino III to respond to the cry of the families of the disappeared by putting a stop to the phenomenon of enforced disappearance and fulfilling the Philippines' pledge as a member of the UN Human Rights Council to sign and ratify the Convention without further delay.



*Edith Burgos with photo of her son Jonas, who disappeared in the Philippines in 2007*

## China: Looking beyond economics, politics

*The following article was written by Sr. Janet Carroll, MM, co-founder and executive director of the U.S. Catholic China Bureau for many years.*

During 2010 most of the news from and about China focused on economic issues and its geo-political extension to Africa, South America, South Asia and the Middle East. China has an insatiable quest for natural resources which are crucial to advance its scientific and industrial development.

Economics is ostensibly the name of the game in China, which dominates its foreign trade with many partners, exporting consumer goods far in excess of its imports. Ironically, despite its already being an excessively materialistic and consumer-oriented society, China constantly is prodded to consume more of both domestic production and of foreign imports. In the financial arena, where China is said to hold 40 cents of every U.S. dollar, hard core policy wonks still adamantly refuse to allow its currency to fluctuate on the foreign exchange market.

Other underlying cultural, social and political factors interact with the hard economic data, serving to both catalyze and to exacerbate the situation, including:

- China's long deferred but now aggressively pursued recognition of its civilization, rich culture and rightful place in the global community – reflected in a revitalized nationalism often exploited by the authorities – even when at times it is incoherent with its own interests;
- its bottomless supply of cheap labor;
- its tight, top-down social and political control;
- its readily manipulated monetary policies - primarily retention of an under-valued currency;
- the zealous drive by the leadership - heavily populated by technocrats - to modernize and succeed in every significant sector: technology, communications, science, and business adventurism;
- and not least, a people with seemingly undaunted capacity to risk.

It ought also to be borne in mind that China's highly touted, rapidly growing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – almost on a par with the U.S. – needs in China's case to be distributed over a population base four times the size of the U.S.

In addition to the factors cited above, in the past six decades deeply ingrained socio-cultural behaviors have been transformed through lived expe-

riences of 1.2 billion Chinese people. This period divides roughly between 1950-80 under Mao Tse Tung and 1980-2010 under the legacy of Deng Xiao Peng. These behaviors have morphed into an incredible optimism vis a vis the future on the part of the Chinese people, who are also driven by an irrepressible determination to realize the promise in long deferred gratification of needs, desires and dreams.

In the latter decades, widespread confidence in existing possibilities – open to all who are willing to work hard – has developed. China's elite, educated youth, whose massive numbers totally skew the demographics, manifest an unquenchable desire to succeed and repay the trust placed in them by self-sacrificing parents. Yet, more recently affluence is thwarting discipline.

At the same time millions of men, and more recently women, from rural regions are flocking to urban districts, seeking their just portion of the bubbling rice pot. They bear an astonishing capacity to sacrifice, endure, and pay any price to enhance the economic development and social well-being of their families left behind in materially deprived villages.

In attempting to fathom any and everything else going on in China, the larger context must be factored in - especially the recent violent irruption on the Korean Peninsula - where China's client-state of North Korea has suddenly and irrationally upped the ante for any pseudo peace accord prevailing with the Republic of South Korea.

Coupled with this are China's own recent aggressive activities – both threatened and taken – in the East China Sea region. Some also see a threat in China's growing military build-up of both air and seas forces and the potential destabilization of the ever thorny relations with Taiwan.

At the same time, the unbalanced bias in western media to report almost exclusively on the “bad news” from China must be objectively analyzed in the context of political, economic and especially shifting foreign relations policies being pursued by its rivals for power and influence in the region. Foremost among them is the U.S. and its allies in the Pacific region – not least among them Japan, China's arch foe for centuries – and to a lesser degree Asia's other giant, India.

Seeking to deepen understanding of China today, we also need to keep in mind how all reality in China is refracted through the prism known as “Chi-

nese characteristics.” This caveat slightly nuances or even radically re-interprets all events. It is China’s autocratic regime which determines what *they* mean by what *they* say, and it is not necessarily what common parlance understands anything to mean to anyone else. Perhaps no more salient factor than this should be born in mind by President Obama, on the eve of President Hu Jin Tao’s visit to the U.S.

Two recent events are interesting case studies in applied “Chinese characteristics.” The first, the government’s response to the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiao Bo, is a case of restrictions on freedoms of speech, political activism and ultimately, of movement. However, the politics inherent in the award on all sides were largely ignored in the media coverage. Respected China consultant Sidney Rittenberg has questioned whether Liu best embodies the ideals of universal human rights most suited to China, or is he (and other western-educated Chinese dissidents) promoting an unrealistic path? In essence, will pursuit of these ideals, as developed in the West, bring hope or disaster to the Chinese people? What is the best way to represent their political aspirations, given their historical political development and the ethos of governance to which they can realistically aspire in the context of their own culture and heritage?

The other event involves the restrictions on religious freedoms as exercised by the Roman Catholic Community in China. At issue is the Chinese Catholic Church’s desire to be in full union with the Universal Church, under the proper jurisdiction of the Holy See. Regrettably, following several years of real progress towards internal unity and reconciliation, matched by external progress towards the restoration of normal diplomatic relations between Beijing and the Vatican, a sudden breach opened in mid-November with the illicit ordination of a priest not yet approved by the Holy See to be the bishop of the newly erected diocese of Cheng De in northeast Hebei province. The illicit ordination of Joseph Guo Jin Cai was shocking, as it had been preceded by the mutually agreed election and validly executed ordination of 10 bishops for other dioceses in the past year alone. Further, Bishop Guo, a graduate of the Catholic University in Leuven, Belgium, is well known to many friends of the China Church. It is widely understood that his freedom of conscience in the matter was severely compromised by pressures which forced him to decide between two equally unacceptable options, a Hobbesian choice at best.

Following on the heels of this unfortunate

event and despite urgent requests by the Holy See to continue to postpone it, the so-called 8th National Catholic Assembly was convened on December 7-9 in Beijing. This assembly purports to bring together China’s bishops - the canonically designated leadership of the China Church, clergy, religious superiors of women and Catholic laity – all on an equal footing with the quasi political leadership of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA). Due to government imposed organizational structures which are totally incompatible with Roman Catholic polity, this so called National Catholic Assembly is unacceptable as a forum of Church governance.

Of added concern in both instances was the fact that the public security police resorted to rather strong arm tactics to coerce the participation of several legitimate bishops at both the illicit Episcopal ordination and at the Assembly.

For their part, doubtlessly all concerned were burdened by psychological anguish and mental and spiritual stress which outsiders cannot fully understand. For the China Church itself, these two unilateral actions by Beijing constitute a severe setback to the mutually sustained dialogue between the concerned authorities in China and in the Vatican, which had begun to show such promise. In both these matters, and absent a fuller knowledge of the realities on the ground for those concerned, we ought to refrain from rushing to rash judgment – let alone unwarranted condemnation - of our sisters and brothers in the faith in China. Rather we ought to offer our prayer and solidarity with them, giving thanks to God for their prophetic stance. Counter-intuitively, we might ask: is not the very fact that the Church and its leaders are under such severe attack in itself a witness to the ever growing significance and strength of the Catholic Church in China today?

In his 2007 pastoral letter to Chinese Catholics, while condemning actions which are manifestly contrary to Catholic ecclesiology and doctrinal teaching, Pope Benedict XVI affirmed his trust and confidence in the bishops of the Church in China to make decisions in each given situation that are in accord with their consciences and judgments as to what is best for the pastoral good of their local churches. This will, in the long term, strengthen the Chinese Catholic Church, confirm its fidelity and loyalty to the Pope, insure its viability and sustain its renewal and development in the context of China’s current and future evolution as a free and open society – with its best “Chinese characteristics” intact.

## Middle East: Time to condemn Israeli settlements

*The following article is excerpted from a longer piece written by Philip C. Wilcox, Jr., president of the Foundation for Middle East Peace (FMEP). Read the article in its entirety at the FMEP website, [www.fmep.org](http://www.fmep.org).*

The Obama administration will face a moment of truth in deciding how to vote on a UN Security Council resolution condemning Israeli settlements under international law now being drafted on behalf of the Palestinians for presentation early this year. But the administration's thwarted efforts to freeze settlements, the huge obstacle settlements pose to a two-state peace, Israel's aggressive expansion of settlements, and the need to restore U.S. credibility as a peace maker are all powerful reasons for supporting this initiative.

Nevertheless, the State Department has said it prefers that settlements be resolved through negotiations as "the only viable path" for ending the conflict. This position is also being pressed by Israel and domestic groups that support Israeli policies unconditionally, and by the House of Representatives which has already called for an American veto of UN resolutions not approved by Israel. The Obama administration has not yet said how it would vote on such a resolution. It still has time to decide that the U.S. should vote yes, for compelling reasons.

Israel's expansionist settlement policy defeats any prospect of winning the U.S. goal of a two-state peace. Direct negotiations over the years, absent effective external intervention, have made no progress whatsoever in changing this policy. Prime Minister Netanyahu's decision to expand settlements ... strongly suggests that he seeks Israel's domination and control there indefinitely. A U.S. veto or abstention, or a successful effort to bury this initiative, would signal to Netanyahu that he can continue to build settlements with impunity. This would further undermine U.S. credibility, and deal another blow to Palestinian President Abbas. Instead, the Obama administration should be looking for authoritative ways to persuade Israel that the U.S. is serious about halting settlements and promoting a two-state peace. A Security Council resolution condemning settlements as a grave obstacle to peace and reaffirming their illegality under international law offers such an opportunity. ...

No one expects that the UN action and international law alone will resolve the settlements issue.

Ultimately, negotiations must do this. But UN action will support (not preempt) effective U.S. diplomacy. There is no reason whatsoever for the U.S., which has championed the UN and international law in other conflicts, to continue its longstanding policy of excluding these institutions from their legitimate role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

President Obama's challenge in Cairo in June 2009 that the "United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements" laid down a strong marker. But it has seemed designed to continue the flimsy distinction between the "illegitimacy" of settlements and their "illegality" under the Fourth Geneva Convention and the practice of all U.S. presidents for the past 30 years of avoiding condemnation of Israeli settlements as "illegal" in the UN and elsewhere under international law.

It was not always this way. After the 1967 war and until 1981, all U.S. administrations condemned settlements as a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. ...

But in 1981 President Reagan disagreed with his predecessors, saying in a press conference that settlements were "not illegal," and the former U.S. policy lapsed. ...

The U.S. policy since 1981 of finessing the legal issue, blocking UN action, and, with rare exceptions, soft-pedaling U.S. opposition to settlements until President Obama's strenuous effort to win a freeze, has been very costly. At the time of Reagan's about-face, there were only 16,000 settlers in the West Bank, compared to over 300,000 today, and 59,000 in East Jerusalem compared to over 200,000 today. This huge growth makes an Israeli-Palestinian peace vastly more difficult ...

The traditional U.S. policy of blocking the UN and application of international law, thus protecting Israel from its own dangerous policies of occupation, is a dysfunctional anachronism. It does no favor to Israel, whose future as a Jewish, democratic state is at risk. It contradicts the Obama administration's own opposition to settlements, and it forfeits a useful lever in persuading Israel to change its policy. Rather than bowing to domestic political pressures, and clinging to the view that the UN and international law have no role to play, the U.S. should rejoin the virtual international consensus on these issues, stand up for its own declared interests, and vote for the proposed Security Council resolution.

## Migration: Faith groups sign resolution

*The following resolution was signed by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and 33 other faith-based organizations; its text is based on a resolution released by the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. It was published in conjunction with the celebration of National Migration Week by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and will be circulated to members of Congress.*

As concerned people of faith and in recognition of the migrants and refugees with whom we live and serve around the world, we endorse the following resolution:

Whereas, the United States of America has historically been a nation built through the labor and contribution of immigrants; from the first pilgrims to the current wave of Latin American migrants, this has been a nation of opportunity and safe refuge for those escaping political turmoil, natural disasters and economic hardship in their country of origin; these migrants and refugees, once they have entered into the borders of this country, have been systematically discriminated against, with their basic rights consistently ignored or exploited; and

Whereas Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, chairman of U.S. Bishop Conference's committee on Migration, stated in his testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, "Individuals and groups must be secure from arrest, torture, and imprisonment for political and ideological reasons, and all in society, including migrant workers, must be guaranteed juridical protection of their personal, social, cultural and political rights. We condemn the abridgement of rights because of race"; and

Whereas, as people of faith, we are all called to serve God through our actions towards those who are poor and marginalized; many of us have lived with, worked alongside, and served migrant communities in the U.S.; we have dedicated our lives to advocating for the dignity and rights of the weary and exploited migrants that have crossed our paths; and

Whereas, migrants include those escaping from political turmoil, natural disasters and economic hardships in their country of origin; immigrants from across the world have served their host communities through the major contributions of their labor; nowhere is this clearer than in the low-wage industries, where wealth is created by garment, restaurant, day labor, domestic, home care workers and

other immigrant workers who receive poverty wages and endure exploitation; and

Whereas, immigrant workers have endured deplorable working conditions such as long work hours without overtime pay, no access to workers compensation, little regard for their health and safety, harassment, discrimination, and blacklisting, and have little or no protection by government agencies in charge of enforcing labor laws; and

Whereas, immigrant workers lack job security, and a living wage and are trapped in these low-wage industries without the hope of improving their lives and that of their families; and

Whereas, immigrant workers face higher levels of exploitation because most lack legal documentation, and they have been subject to threats and harassment to be expelled from their host countries, incarcerated and deported thereby creating a fearful working and living environment; and

Whereas, immigrant workers have been pushed into the shadows of society, into a semi-permanent state of insecurity and vulnerability; more specifically, due to mass deportations, the criminalization of migrants, and the militarization of the Southwest border; and

Whereas the current hostile environment towards immigrants in the United States includes: anti-immigration legislation in several states, counties and localities; pending legislation in many other jurisdictions; xenophobia, racism, and barely concealed hatred; and

Whereas, immigrant workers and their families, because of their immigration status, are also systematically denied access to a driver's license, decent healthcare, social services, and quality education;

Let it be resolved that we, as people of faith living and working with immigrants, hereby endorse the following principles as guidelines for a better world for immigrants in the United States. We urge all others to uphold these principles as we work together to improve the conditions for low-wage immigrant workers and their families.

**JUSTICE:** All immigrant workers deserve and must receive the following support to lead healthy, decent and productive lives:

True legalization should be given in the form of permanent legal status and citizenship. This should not be limited to any country of origin or work industry.

Greater protection and enforcement of inter-

national labor laws, which will guarantee at least minimum wage and security from blacklisting, harassment and intimidation of any kind.

DIGNITY: All immigrant workers and their families deserve:

Clean, safe and proper working conditions to prevent illness, stress and workplace accidents.

Access to decent and quality healthcare, and

nutrition.

Permanent, stable and secure work.

Access to quality education.

Access to safe affordable housing.

DEMOCRACY: All immigrant workers and their families must hold the same freedoms and rights as any member of their host country. Immigrant families must be able to voice their concerns.

## Future strategies for sustainable living

*In a one-hour PBS special called “Fixing the Future,” which aired on November 18, host David Brancaccio brought viewers a glimpse of the future seen through the eyes of people across the United States who are working to create a new economy by using innovative approaches to create jobs and build prosperity.*

Brancaccio’s analysis started with a basic distrust of the measure our society uses to measure economic success: gross domestic product (GDP). While GDP measures how much money is circulated in society, well-being is not always considered. Think of how a car crash increases GDP – car repairs, medical bills, and perhaps lawyer’s fees all add up. Great for GDP, but not great for the person who is involved in the accident. (See the *NewsNotes* special six-part series on ecological economics, published in 2009. The articles are posted on our website or available by request.)

Brancaccio traveled across the U.S., exploring how people in the U.S. are creating a path toward prosperity with a focus on local community wealth. The program shows that throughout the country people are busy building a new economy and more sustainable ways of living.

In Bellingham, WA he interviewed Michelle Long of Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE), a network of socially responsible businesses that collaborate to build an economy based on sustainable practices. Based on the belief that local, independent businesses are uniquely prepared to align commerce with the common good and bring transparency, accountability, and a caring human face to the marketplace, BALLE catalyzes and connects local business networks dedicated to economies that reflect the full-costs of production while exposing the real inefficiencies of factory farming, conventional construction, and urban sprawl.

In Cleveland, OH, Brancaccio takes viewers to meet the worker-owners of Evergreen Cooperative Laundry, a co-op committed to environmentally-friendly laundry services. By linking to anchor institutions like local hospitals, this laundry cooperative has changed people’s lives – allowing them to stay in the local area rather than moving to find jobs or looking for illegal means to survive. While in Cleveland, Brancaccio visits Ted Howard of Community Wealth, a clearing house for tools and information on community-based economic development. Howard’s work with the Cleveland Foundation has helped spread the Evergreen model to serve other anchor institutions’ needs with other job-creating worker owned enterprises.

Brancaccio considered the ecological cost of transportation as he documented these innovative community alternatives throughout the country. As much as possible while keeping pace with his demanding schedule, he tried to take buses, trains and other greener forms of transportation.

This program and the accompanying website serve as a wonderful resource for anyone interested in replicating efforts or becoming involved with existing ones. The *Fixing the Future* website maps places where people can see what alternatives are already being practiced around the country, such as local banking, car and bike sharing, farmers’ markets and “time sharing,” which includes offering cooked meals, car rides, lawn work, etc., where each hour of service earns the participant an hour of some other service provided by another “time share” member.

### ***Faith in action:***

Get involved in fixing the future. List your own community initiatives and connect with the ones already posted: <http://www.pbs.org/now/fixing-the-future/get-involved.html>.



## Confessions of an over-consuming church

*Below is an excerpt from the Accra Confession adopted by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) in 2004. It challenges people of faith to recognize the ways in which consumerism keeps people from caring for creation while keeping them from fully loving themselves, others and God.*

... 18. We believe that God is sovereign over all creation. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." (Psalms 24.1)

19. Therefore, we reject the current world economic order imposed by global neo-liberal capitalism and any other economic system, including absolute planned economies, which defy God's covenant by excluding the poor, the vulnerable and the whole of creation from the fullness of life. We reject any claim of economic, political and military empire which subverts God's sovereignty over life and acts contrary to God's just rule.

20. We believe that God has made a covenant with all of creation (Genesis 9.8-12). God has brought into being an earth community based on the vision of justice and peace. The covenant is a gift of grace that is not for sale in the market place (Isaiah 55.1). It is an economy of grace for the household of all of creation. Jesus shows that this is an inclusive covenant in which the poor and marginalized are preferential partners and calls us to put justice for the "least of these" (Matthew 25.40) at the center of the community of life. All creation is blessed and included in this covenant (Hosea 2.18ff).

21. Therefore we reject the culture of rampant consumerism and the competitive greed and selfishness of the neo-liberal global market system or any other system which claims there is no alternative.

22. We believe that any economy of the household of life given to us by God's covenant to sustain life is accountable to God. We believe the economy exists to serve the dignity and wellbeing of people in community, within the bounds of the sustainability of creation. We believe that human beings are called to choose God over Mammon and that confessing our faith is an act of obedience.

23. Therefore we reject the unregulated accumulation of wealth and limitless growth that has already cost the lives of millions and destroyed much of God's creation.

24. We believe that God is a God of justice. In a world of corruption, exploitation and greed, God

is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, the exploited, the wronged and the abused (Psalms 146.7-9). God calls for just relationships with all creation.

25. Therefore we reject any ideology or economic regime that puts profits before people, does not care for all creation and privatizes those gifts of God meant for all...

26. We believe that God calls us to stand with those who are victims of injustice. We know what the Lord requires of us: to do justice, love kindness, and walk in God's way (Micah 6.8). We are called to stand against any form of injustice in the economy and the destruction of the environment, "so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5.24)....

...28. We believe that God calls us to hear the cries of the poor and the groaning of creation and to follow the public mission of Jesus Christ who came so that all may have life and have it in fullness (John 10.10). ...

33. We commit ourselves to seek a global covenant for justice in the economy and the earth in the household of God.

34. We humbly confess this hope, knowing that we, too, stand under the judgment of God's justice.

- We acknowledge the complicity and guilt of those who consciously or unconsciously benefit from the current neo-liberal economic global system; we recognize that this includes both churches and members of our own Reformed family and therefore we call for confession of sin.
- We acknowledge that we have become captivated by the culture of consumerism and the competitive greed and selfishness of the current economic system. This has all too often permeated our very spirituality.
- We confess our sin in misusing creation and failing to play our role as stewards and companions of nature...

### **Faith in action:**

Read the full document [http://www.warc.ch/documents/ACCRA\\_Pamphlet.pdf](http://www.warc.ch/documents/ACCRA_Pamphlet.pdf) and incorporate in your community's prayer. Rein in your own consumer tendencies by asking yourself these important questions from Mother Earth News while shopping: <http://www.mnn.com/lifestyle/responsible-living/stories/get-on-board-the-non-consumption-train>

## UN Climate Change Conference: 50-50-50

You, O God, are the Holy One who gathers us together in the womb of our earth. *This is a beautiful and poetic opening sentence to the prayer in the People's Companion to the Breviary for the morning of January 1. On the first day of the New Year humanity is reminded that it is one species stemming from a common origin intimately connected to the Earth. Implied is the destiny of all who emerge from the womb: To grow and develop.*

Part of the early development of humanity was awakening to consciousness of the future. As humanity sharpened its sense of the future, it universally developed a sense of hope for a better future for its offspring. Everywhere touching stories are told of parents who sacrifice for their children's future. This basic human characteristic continues to evolve. Today it takes the form of a pull toward thinking as a species for the well-being of whole generations of future children. Unfolding along side of this is the knowledge that the well-being of the next generations will be dependent on a healthy and flourishing Planet Earth. Just as at a certain point a child must care for its mother, humanity, which has degraded the Earth in recent decades, must now care for it as it would care for the womb from which it emerged.

Attending the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Cancun, Mexico in December 2010 heightened the sense of where humanity has been and provided a peek at where it may be headed. Regarding the distant past, the meeting was held near ancient ruins where the Mayan civilization developed and flourished. At the conference though, it was the future that most impinged upon consciousness. First of all, from all countries a cross-section of humanity was present. In this great mix, labels of developed and undeveloped peoples were not easily apparent. Rather, those present were fundamentally characterized by thinking into the future for the well-being of generations of humanity yet to be conceived. The immediate past, with its over-exploitation of resources, stood as witness to the need to create a future that uses resources sustainably, so that the whole human species may go ahead in dignity and prosperity.

Fifty-fifty-fifty! These are the words used repeatedly in Cancun by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. They articulate the direction of the human course if future generations are to find

themselves born onto a planet that is hospitable. The meaning is stark. By 2050 the global population will have increased by 50 percent, bringing it up to nine billion people. For life to be tolerable, greenhouse gas emissions will have to be cut by 50 percent below the 1990 level. A second phrase constantly reiterated was, "Building low-carbon economies." The last phrase that characterized the conference was, "Do not let the perfect be the enemy of the good." On top of the mythos engendered by these phrases were continuous hard work and frank negotiations. Fortunately, China and the United States were more conciliatory than most people had thought possible. India came forward as a brilliant, competent leader and the conference preparation by Mexico was unquestionably excellent.

Conference President Dr. Patricia Espinosa was efficient and diplomatic; she demanded complete transparency of the conference participants and led the negotiations with dexterity and finesse. The new Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Dr. Christina Figueres, proved herself to be an apt spokesperson for a united and focused conference outcome. She challenged everyone to invest in a safer, healthier, more prosperous world.

The most noteworthy achievement of the conference was to "solidify the role of the United Nations at the center of international policy and cooperation moving forward": Countries' greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets are definitively under the UNFCCC process.

Greater transparency in emissions reporting by all countries is ensured. A Green Climate Fund to help facilitate financial support to developing countries was established. (See Reflections on the Cancun Agreements at [www.wri.org](http://www.wri.org)) For a summary of outcomes see the UNFCCC December 11 press release.

The agreements that were reached at Cancun do not of themselves guarantee the future. What they accomplish is a step forwards ... a step, not a giant step! Nevertheless, the capacity for working together as one human family was strengthened. A reasonable foundation was established for building up, higher as it were, towards a better horizon for all. True, a colossal amount of work will have to be done in order to fill in the gaps of the present Agreement; however, the direction set is hopeful.

## Climate change: Hopeful efforts on forests

During the past 50 years Earth's forests have been disappearing at an alarming rate due to over-exploitation and development. A consequence of this has been reduced carbon sinks or holders throughout the planet, leading to rising temperatures. In the years leading up to the 1992 Earth Summit it became increasingly clear that a major feature of the work of the UN would be to enable nations to understand the role of the forests in safeguarding Earth's atmosphere and the common nature of human responsibility to preserve the forests for the sake of future societies. This work has been rendered difficult by the fact that many countries are only recently on the verge of lifting their populations out of poverty. Previously, it was thought that these nations would follow the same development patterns of wealthier ones. It was the work of the UN to point out that this avenue is not viable; it would hasten resource depletion as well as irreversible and intolerable climate change impacts.

Naturally, understanding must be translated into public activities and strategies. This applies to all nations wherever they find themselves along the development trajectory:

- Developing nations must use national forests to enhance the well-being of the planet while providing real benefits for their citizens. Low-carbon development projects are the standard.
- Developed nations need to share knowledge, technology and financial resources in order to make this happen. They must also shift away from economic and social patterns that release excessive carbon and other greenhouse gases into Earth's atmosphere.

The 2010 UN Climate Change conference held in Cancun, Mexico strengthened the work regarding forest protection and management through a document referred to as Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD). Among other points: It definitively addresses the overall goal of REDD "to slow, halt and reverse forest cover loss and carbon loss"; it "clarifies the scope of what will be considered relevant activities" in line with the above; it "approves a phased approach for developing countries in meeting specific objectives" for conserving and enhancing the forests within national territories; it acknowledges the human rights of indigenous people and local communities living in or adjacent to forests; and it clarifies the role of

developed countries to provide resources and "to address their own actions that drive deforestation." (See *Reflections on the Cancun Agreements*, [www.wri.org](http://www.wri.org).)

Today, a significant challenge for Maryknoll missionaries is working with multiple organizations and institutions around the world to achieve the vision set forth by the UN. Following is a brief description of a Maryknoll forest preservation project that follows the vision created by the UN. The project was accomplished in collaboration with national and international institutions.

By 1990, the Philippines was on the verge of biological collapse; in response, the Maryknoll Sisters established an environment education center in the small northern city of Baguio, located at the threshold of Mountain Province, a zone increasingly marked by forest degradation. The project provides a hands-on experience of forest protection and teaches, as a moral imperative, the need for life sustaining interaction with the environment.

The project was made possible by the response of the Philippine government to the Earth Summit. The government took advantage of a mechanism provided by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) for establishing a Debt-for-Nature swap. To do this the government created the Foundation for the Philippine Environment (FPE). FPE, in turn, provided a vehicle through which NGOs could receive funding in exchange for work protecting endangered or threatened fragments of ecological systems.

In the case of Maryknoll, FPE provided funding to engage professional and technological services for a project development study that would attract additional funding and present feasible ways in which the project could become self-reliant. In addition, the study included values that were based on the knowledge and insight of local indigenous people.

Because of the quality of the project development study, funding for the implementation stage of the project was secured, and many of the study's recommendations for achieving self-reliance were developed. Notably, an organic mini-farm was incorporated into the project drawing attention to sustainable agroforestry. The project has become the icon for locating Maryknoll's ecological work within the context of global sustainability; like the forests, it holds unlimited promise.

## Next steps toward nuclear disarmament

*Passage of the new START Treaty during the Congressional lame duck session kept hope alive that the Obama administration's commitment to nuclear disarmament could have an impact. Although legitimate and serious questions have been posed about the cost of this ratification, especially the significant investment in new or existing nuclear facilities and the unabashed promotion of a missile shield, without ratification of new START, any serious move toward nuclear disarmament would have been off the political table for the foreseeable future.*

While the administration has mentioned U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty as the desired next step, Abolition 2000, the global umbrella group of over 2,000 peace and nuclear disarmament groups worldwide, is also urging every country with nuclear weapons to take them off high alert. Abolition 2000 members see this as essential to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the implementation of a global nuclear weapons convention that would provide a legal framework permanently outlawing nuclear weapons.

According to Abolition 2000, "There have been over the years a number of incidents involving especially U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons systems in which it is not an exaggeration to say that the end of the world has been potentially minutes away. We've been saved by a cool Russian colonel who didn't press a red button, by an aide to President Yeltsin who said 'Excuse me Mr. President let's wait another minute' and by a U.S. Minuteman launch control officer who -- as a practice launch sequence turned into the real thing and wouldn't stop -- ordered heavy military vehicles driven on top of silo doors.

In a letter to presidents, prime ministers, foreign ministers, secretaries of state and UN diplomatic missions of the countries understood to possess nuclear weapons -- the U.S., Russia, France, the United Kingdom, China, North Korea, India, Pakistan, and Israel -- Abolition 2000 wrote:

"Perhaps most dangerous aspect of today's nuclear arsenals are the many thousands of nuclear weapons which remain on high-alert, launch-ready status. There is strong international agreement, shown by the overwhelming support in the General Assembly that 'calls upon the Nuclear Weapon States to take measures to reduce the risk of an accidental or unauthorized launch of nuclear weapons and to

also consider further reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons systems in ways that promote international stability and security.'

"The international community, including the leaders of States possessing nuclear weapons, has recognized that any use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic consequences - and thus a practice and norm of non-use has developed.

"However, as the leader of a State in possession of nuclear weapons, you have the possibility to initiate a nuclear war at any time. With more than 20,000 nuclear weapons in the world, a nuclear first-strike can start a chain reaction that would end in a nuclear holocaust. Recent scientific studies tell us that the detonation of even one percent of the operational nuclear arsenals during a conflict would cause grave changes in the climate and ecology of the Earth; a large nuclear war would end human existence.

"Thus, the operational and deployed nuclear arsenals of the States possessing nuclear weapons and the continued policies providing for possible use in a wide range of circumstances, represent a self-destruct mechanism for humanity. It only takes a single failure of nuclear deterrence to trigger global nuclear suicide.

"Yet, as the leader of a Nuclear Weapon State, you can choose to act now to prevent such an ultimate catastrophe. We urge you to issue a Presidential Decree which forbids the launch of nuclear weapons based only on a tactical or strategic warning of attack (electronic signals from early warning systems, which could be a false warning or represent conventional warheads), and to de-alert your launch-ready nuclear forces ...

"Of course the only way to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used by accident, miscalculation or intent is to prohibit and eliminate them ... Until recently, such an aim appeared utopian. However, the political and technical feasibility of nuclear abolition is now apparent from the statements of world leaders, the agreement at the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and the Five-Point-Plan put forward by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon which includes a draft treaty [which includes de-alerting as the first step] ...

"We urge you to prohibit launch on warning, de-alert your nuclear weapons and join the process to achieve a global prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons under a nuclear weapons convention."

## Torture: Step in right direction but long way to go

*In early November, Assistant Secretary of State Esther Brimmer presented the first-ever U.S. Universal Periodic Review report to the United Nations Human Rights Council. In introducing the U.S. delegation, comprised of senior officials from 11 U.S. departments and agencies, a representative of U.S. local authorities, and two advisers from civil society groups, Brimmer said, "Their participation reflects the depth of our commitment to human rights at home, which spans the federal government as well as state, local, and tribal governments across our country, and which is complemented by the deep commitment from President Obama and Secretary Clinton to multilateral engagement, human rights, and the rule of law."*

The Obama administration has been deeply disappointing in its inability to honor its commitment, for example, to close the U.S. detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and in its refusal to prosecute high level U.S. officials responsible for torture and other violations of international law, but U.S. participation in the Universal Periodic Review process was nonetheless important.

Each member country of the United Nations is required to report on its human rights situation to the Human Rights Council and then to be questioned, challenged, and applauded by other nations. According to Brimmer, the State Department, Homeland Security, Department of Defense, Department of Justice, Health and Human Services and the Department of the Interior prepared the report by holding hearings across the U.S. about the U.S. human rights record. The 29-page report included a wide range of concerns, from racial profiling and immigration to torture and homelessness.

Discussion that followed presentation of the report covered issues from the death penalty to human trafficking. Brimmer wrote, "We did not shrink from criticism either from governments, including those that have no credibility when it comes to their own poor human rights records, or our own civil society. The issues of torture and detention were very much front and center. Many delegations urged the prompt closure of the Guantanamo Bay detention facility..."

Unfortunately, that seems less and less likely. On December 22, the Senate included a provision in the National Defense Authorization Act to elimi-

nate the possibility of trying Guantanamo detainees in U.S. federal courts. The new provision completely strips the government of the federal court option until September 2011 or until a new authorization bill is passed, effectively blocking closure of the Guantanamo detention facilities in the near future. The House of Representatives passed a similar provision on December 17. Human Rights Watch (HRW) Washington director Tom Malinowski said, "By hindering the prosecution of Guantanamo detainees in federal court, Congress has denied the president the only legally sustainable and globally legitimate means to incarcerate terrorists... If the Congress has its way, detainees are now just going to sit in Guantanamo indefinitely, and as evidence grows stale, prosecution down the road is only going to become more difficult."

According to HRW, the bill also contains new rules requiring that, prior to transferring a detainee even to his home country, the U.S. must certify certain factors exist related to that country's ability to monitor and control the detainee and its past experience with terrorism. With more than half of the remaining Guantanamo detainees from Yemen and others from places like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, it may be extremely difficult for the administration to certify these factors exist. As a result, detainees who have already been cleared for release, some of whom have been held for more than eight years, may continue to be held indefinitely in violation of U.S. obligations under international law.

The new rules also prevent the transfer of a detainee to a country if there are any recorded cases of "confirmed recidivism," which is not defined. While U.S. government reports claim rates of recidivism among released Guantanamo detainees as high as 25 percent, these reports have been soundly discredited by academics and experts who have closely analyzed the figures and cross-referenced them with publicly available information. The U.S. government has never released a list of names of alleged recidivists or details of their alleged conduct.

Currently, 174 detainees are imprisoned at Guantanamo, which enters its tenth year of operation on January 11. The Obama administration has indicated that it intends to hold 48 of those detainees without trial under purported laws-of-war-detention and prosecute another 36. It has cleared for transfer the remaining 90 detainees.

On January 11, to keep pressure on the Obama administration to close Guantanamo and hold to account those who designed and carried out torture policies, Witness Against Torture will launch a daily vigil and fast that will continue for 11 days and include demonstrations throughout Washington, D.C. The days of action will begin with a rally and “prisoner procession” to the Department of Justice, where members of Witness Against Torture will engage in nonviolent direct action.

Witness Against Torture is also focusing attention on Bagram and other U.S.-administered prisons in Afghanistan, where the administration has intensified military operations.

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT), of which the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is a member, is calling for an independent commission of inquiry into the acts of torture committed by the United States since September 11, 2001. From this, it hopes recommendations and safeguards will be made to ensure that torture ends for good. Second, it is advocating for administrative changes, including an expansion of criminal investigations for those who allowed torture to happen, removing Appendix M from the Army Field Manual which allows for prolonged isolation, sleep depriva-

tion and sensory deprivation, and closing Guantanamo Bay. Third, NRCAT is advocating for important provisions, such as videotaping interrogations, transferring inmates to other countries and allowing the International Committee of the Red Cross access to detainees, to be made into an anti-torture law.

On the domestic level, NRCAT is working to pass the Prison Abuse Remedies Act which would make it easier for prison inmates to sue when they have been tortured, or physically or sexually abused. NRCAT is also pushing to pass the National Criminal Justice Commission Act that would create a bipartisan panel to review all aspects of the U.S. criminal justice system and could make recommendations for ending torture in U.S. prisons.

On the international level, NRCAT is working to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT), which ensures that torture does not happen in places where other anti-torture treaties do not protect, such as prisons, psychiatric facilities and immigrant detention centers. NRCAT is also creating a “torture watch list” to keep an eye on countries that allow torture, and is promoting legislation that would offer incentives to other countries working to end torture.

### **Ecumenical Advocacy Days**

March 25-28, 2011, Washington, D.C.

*“Give her a share in the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the city gates.” - Proverbs 31*

Development, security and economic justice: What’s gender got to do with it? Gender's got everything to do with it! Women's roles and contributions are integral to the cultural, spiritual and economic viability of their families, communities and nations.

In many settings, women are able to develop to the fullest of their capacity and thus enrich their social, religious and family environments. Tragically, in other settings from the home to the marketplace, to the borders and frontlines, women and girls are frequently kept from attaining their full potential because of violence, poverty and lack of access to healthcare and education, among other social evils.

You can be a formidable force for change! Women and men of faith must come together to speak boldly on behalf of all God's daughters and sons, for their physical and emotional safety, their economic security and their freedom.

Ecumenical Advocacy Days will inspire and equip Christians of all backgrounds to advocate for people-centered sustainable development, safety and security, economic justice and peacemaking, recognizing the vital roles and unique needs of women here in the United States and around the world. The conference is sponsored by over 40 faith-based organizations and faithful partners, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. After three days filled with worship and dialogue, we will go together to let our voices be heard on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

Let us know if you want to join us as we would like to organize a Maryknoll gathering that weekend. Write to [ogc@maryknoll.org](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org), subject line EAD. Check the EAD website to register to attend and to find more information about the schedule and workshops: [www.advocacydays.org](http://www.advocacydays.org)

## Resources

1. **Education and strategy conference on U.S. militarism, April 8-10:** Sponsored by Latin America Solidarity Coalition (LASC) in conjunction with School of the Americas Watch Days of Action, April 4-11, Washington, D.C. The weekend's events will include plenaries and workshops to educate and plan actions, strategies, and organizing tools. Topics will include U.S. military bases, military spending, immigration and border militarization, privatization of war, closing the School of the Americas, foreign military and police aid, growing our skills in media, research, and other organizing, counter recruitment and support for active duty resisters, U.S. relations with Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia, Haiti, Mexico, Honduras, etc., organizing within sectors to resist militarism, domestic costs of militarism, direct action, and much more. To learn more, visit the LASC webpage at [www.lasolidarity.org](http://www.lasolidarity.org), or SOA Watch Days of Action webpage at [www.soaw.org/take-action/lobby-days](http://www.soaw.org/take-action/lobby-days).
2. **Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Annual Training:** MPI, a peacebuilding organization in Davao City, Philippines, is hosting a series of classes **May 16-June 3**. Course topics include "Theory and Practice of Meditation," "Religion: Peacebuilding in Multi-Cultural Societies," and "Gender, Peace and Everyday Life Security." MPI asks that applicants be able to speak and write in English and have at least two years of peacebuilding experience or related human rights or development experience. To obtain an application contact MPI at (+63) (82) (282-2455) or [mpi@mpiasia.net](mailto:mpi@mpiasia.net). Visit [mpiasia.net](http://mpiasia.net) for more information on the organization.
3. **The Story of Electronics:** The latest video in the "Story of Stuff" series, "The Story of Electronics" uses cartoon imagery and simple language to explain the damage electronics have in the environment and how capitalism does nothing to help. The video is a great tool to educate any audience. Visit <http://storyofstuff.org/electronics/> to watch this video and others like it.
4. **Enough is Enough:** A report put out by the Steady State Economy Conference, "Enough is Enough" makes *enough* rather than *more* an economic goal. The report discusses ways in which an economy where everyone has enough can move forward while examining the concerns of the planet. The report can be found at <http://steadystate.org/enough-is-enough/>.
5. **No More Boring Data:** Hans Rosling discusses in a video how to use the variety of data available about global economics and poverty. He uses humor and visual aids to engage the audience around global issues. Watch the video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVimVzgtD6w&feature=channel>
6. **The Emphatic Civilization:** A video discussing the science behind emphatic human nature and the benefits of an emphatic society. The video explores how empathy could change the way religion, nationality, economics and a variety of other societal issues are seen. Watch the video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l7AWnfFRc7g>
7. **All that we share: A Field Guide to the Commons:** What do water, human knowledge and the internet all have in common? According to this book, they are all common human property. "All that we share," edited by journalist Jay Walljasper, introduces a variety of fresh ideas about common resources. Visit <http://onthecommons.org/all-that-we-share> to purchase a copy.
8. **Seeing the world anew:** In a new report Maria Riley analyzes the current neo-liberal approach to development regarding the economy, hunger, migration, climate-change, energy, finance and care. She shows what is not working and provides alternative solutions. Visit <http://www.coc.org/node/6539> to obtain and read the report.
9. **Workers of the World Relax:** Two videos that portray the need of a shorter work week. While new inventions seem to enable more leisure time they actually demand the opposite. The films show not only the benefits of less work but the dangers of our current workaholic culture. To watch the films visit <http://workersoftheworldrelax.org/>.