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## God's living seas and oceans

*In this issue of NewsNotes we continue our reflection on water, which is essential to life, with a few words from the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Program on "God's Living Seas and Oceans."*

O God, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the sea, great and wide, teeming with creatures beyond number, living things both large and small. There the ships go to and fro, and the leviathan, which you formed to frolic there. (Based on Psalm 104)

The oceans' influences are felt by every living thing on Earth, no matter the distance from the seashore. Oceans often define the cultural identity of island and coastal communities. Even for communities far from the shore, oceans are invaluable. Oceans are not only physical transportation byways, but ocean currents help stabilize the climate. Oceans are also a source of food by providing fish and other sea life for our tables. And oceans are a source of life-sustaining oxygen, which is produced by its microbial plants and animals.

The living oceans cover more than 70 percent of our planet, have mountains taller than Mt. Everest and canyons deeper than the Grand Canyon, and contain 97 percent of all living matter, from microscopic organisms to the largest animals on Earth, including the blue whale, which can reach 100 feet in length and weigh 160 tons ...

The diverse and fragile marine ecosystems have an impact on people since oceans help determine weather patterns, serve as the Earth's "lungs," produce food, and contribute to tourism and recreational opportunities... Fishing, done by humans for thousands of years, not only supplies food for those who fish, but also is commercially and culturally important in many countries ...

Marine ecosystems around the world are being threatened by coastal development, pollution, overfishing, tourism, and a host of other human endeavors. These activities have led to the decline of ocean wildlife and the near collapse of ocean ecosystems. For genera-

tions the living oceans have been exploited as a resource, not honored as one of God's gifts. We have consumed without regard, dumped what we no longer needed, and physically altered the marine environment...

Coral reefs and natural shoreline ecosystems such as mangrove swamps can protect human populations from storms and tsunamis. Although no amount of natural protection can prevent all destruction, environmental degradation almost certainly makes the impact worse. Largely intact coral reefs in the Maldives are credited with sparing that island nation from the worst of the December 2004 tsunami's impact. Satellite images

of Aceh, Indonesia showed that the tsunami's destruction was worse in areas where mangroves had been cleared for development and fish farms.

Today, more than ever, we understand the interconnectedness of all life and the disruptive impact humankind can have on this balance. As we gain an ever-deeper awareness of the connections between our activities on the

land and the health of marine ecosystems, we also gain an understanding of how we can partner with God in the restoration and healing of creation. We must act on this knowledge in order to protect our oceans and seas, not only to preserve God's creation, but also so that future generations will be able to enjoy clean beaches, healthy seafood, abundant ocean wildlife, and thriving coastal communities.

Praise God from the heavens, praise God in the heights above.

Praise God, all God's heavenly hosts.

Praise the Creator of sun and moon, praise God all you shining stars.

Praise God, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies.

Let them praise the name of God, for God commanded and they were created.

God set them in place for ever and ever; God gave a decree that will never pass away.

Praise God from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths. (based on Psalm 148)



## Indonesia: U.S. Senate urged to restrict military aid

*The U.S. House has voted to lift restrictions on military aid to Indonesia in the FY 2006 Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, prompting an outcry from human rights advocates. The East Timor and Indonesia Action Network (ETAN) called on U.S. senators to retain the restrictions in the Senate version of the bill. The Senate Appropriations Committee was expected to take up its version of the measure shortly after the House action June 29.*

The House vote, which came six months after the tsunami devastated Indonesia's Aceh province, "represents a slap in the face for survivors who continue to be victimized by the Indonesian military," said ETAN spokesperson John M. Miller. "This military refuses to accept a ceasefire and opposes any concessions toward a negotiated settlement." An estimated 10,000 persons have died in Aceh during fighting between Indonesian security forces and the Free Aceh Movement, which has been struggling for an independent state since the 1970s.

Elsewhere, Miller said, "humanitarian and human rights conditions have significantly deteriorated in West Papua, and militarization of the entire archipelago has increased" under the new president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. "Accountability for crimes against humanity in East Timor remains a distant goal," he added.

ETAN cited reports of extrajudicial executions by the military, thousands of internally displaced persons and dangerous shortages of food and medicine in West Papua. It also warned against "the possible misuse of development assistance to finance military operations and create militia, a situation strikingly similar to past military sponsorship of militia to ravage Timor-Leste (East Timor) prior to independence."

The U.S. severed all military ties with Indonesia in September 1999 as the military and its militia proxies razed East Timor. The former Portuguese colony became independent in May 2002.

In late February 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice restored full IMET funds for Indonesia. ETAN noted that just two days later, the State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices said, "Security force members murdered, tortured, raped, beat, and arbitrarily detained civilians and members of separatist movements, especially in Aceh and to a lesser extent in Papua." East Timorese and Indonesian NGOs have repeatedly called for restrictions on military engagement to be maintained.

When Yudhoyono made his first White House visit

May 25, the Bush administration lifted restrictions in place since 1999 on the sale of "non-lethal" surplus military equipment and on foreign military sales of non-lethal items, allowing the Indonesian government to buy military equipment, services and training directly from the U.S. government.

The House vote June 29 lifted restrictions to Indonesia on IMET (International Military Education and Training) funds, foreign military financing (FMF) and export licenses for lethal defense articles. A year ago Congress set conditions on licenses, including presidential certification that the Indonesian government is prosecuting members of the armed forces accused of rights violations or aiding militia groups and punishing those guilty of such acts.

Despite negotiations between the Indonesian government and the rebel Free Aceh Movement, ETAN said military operations in Aceh have killed hundreds since the tsunami. It called for transparency in the use of international funds to rebuild Aceh and said U.S. funds should be steered away from any business or organization affiliated with the military.

When Yudhoyono visited Washington, D.C., ETAN and other groups wrote to President Bush, alleging ongoing human rights violations by Indonesia's security forces and impunity for crimes against humanity.

They said Indonesia's plan to escalate the military presence throughout the archipelago would "likely lead to increased human rights violations and illegal military activities, such as massive logging and human trafficking." They also noted that "(o)fficers accused of significant human rights violations still maintain powerful positions and are rewarded with promotions." (See <http://etan.org/news/2005/05bush.htm#letter>.)

ETAN, a grassroots organization based in Washington, D.C., tries to increase public support for human rights in Indonesia and for justice and self-determination in East Timor.

### **Faith in action:**

Write to your U.S. senators and urge them to retain restrictions on military aid to Indonesia in the FY 2006 Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. Ask them to make military aid conditional upon Indonesia's demonstrating greater respect for human rights and implementing military reform in the country. Ask them to insist that local and international humanitarian and human rights organizations and the media be allowed unconditional access throughout Aceh and West Papua.

## Thailand: Human rights groups seek end to violence

*Thailand's five southern provinces, annexed in 1902, are home to most of the country's six million Muslims. In the 1970s and 1980s, Muslim separatists in the area fought for independence from the predominantly Buddhist country of 63 million. The region has suffered sporadic violence since 2001, but some human rights organizations say the government's response is too harsh.*

The National Human Rights Commission of Thailand has demanded government compensation for victims after authorities used force to break up a demonstration in Takbai, Narathiwat province, resulting in 85 deaths. However, the commission also held the entire nation responsible for violence in the south, calling for greater understanding between cultures to help ensure peaceful coexistence.

Meanwhile, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace said the government's aggressive response toward the demonstrators and toward alleged drug offenders around the country indicate that Thai society has entered an "age of structural violence," and said the trend is becoming worse.

The incident at Takbai, 700 miles south of Bangkok, occurred Oct. 25, 2004. More than 1,000 people had gathered in front of a police station to demand the release of several community defense volunteers accused of stealing state property.

The government says the crowd became unruly, throwing objects and destroying property, and troops acted to restore order. In the ensuing action, seven persons were killed. Another 78 suffocated after troops tied the hands of hundreds of demonstrators and piled them three deep on military trucks and drove them away for questioning.

The Human Rights Commission faulted the troops for resorting to violent measures, including firing live ammunition, assaulting those arrested, and transporting them in such a way as to cause deaths.

A Human Rights subcommission investigated the Takbai incident from Nov. 12, 2004, to March 31, 2005. In its report, issued May 4, it said the government should compensate the victims and work to prevent future human rights violations. It also called on officials to respect differences in thought, culture and religious belief. It further called for building up "the participatory process of local people" and for creating better understanding among all parties to help bring trust and unity.

The Human Rights Commission said it is the

responsibility of all of Thai society to address the violence in the south. "The government alone is unable ... to bring about peace and redress the situation," it said. "Understanding and empathy of all people in the nation, the recognition of different (cultures and modes of thought), and the equal treatment of other people will lessen violence and create unity."

Meanwhile, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace took issue with government policy both toward the demonstrators at Takbai and toward alleged drug offenders in the country.

In February 2003 Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra declared a "war on drugs" in Thailand, apparently in response to the spread of methamphetamine use. Within three months 2,275 alleged drug offenders were reportedly shot dead, many in apparent extrajudicial executions. The Catholic Commission criticized the government's policy of using force and noted that "the question of violence does not occur solely in the south."

The right to participate in peaceful demonstrations is enshrined in the Thai Constitution, the Catholic Commission said. It added that the incident at Takbai shows the use of force and violence can never resolve problems. On the contrary, it said, violence "is dehumanizing and leads Thai society to destruction and chaos."

The Catholic Commission also took the mass media to task, accusing the media of presenting some in the south as aggressive and as separatists who must be eliminated. "The government has projected hatred and nourished distrust in the hearts of Thai people around the country" through the media, the commission added. It said government policies have only led to violence and death, discrediting Thailand in the eyes of the world.

More than 600 persons have reportedly been killed in violence in Thailand's largely Muslim south in the past year.

### **Faith in action:**

Write to the ambassador of Thailand, H.E. Mr. Kasit Piromya, at The Royal Thai Embassy, 1024 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Suite 101, Washington, D.C. 20007. Ask that Thai authorities respect the rights of the accused and follow due process when confronting demonstrators or alleged drug offenders. Urge more development aid for Thailand's southern provinces to help integrate Muslims into the country's economic and political fabric.

## Philippines: Demand an end to political killings

*More than 130 Philippine senators and representatives have protested the killing this year of 31 persons, mostly political activists, around the country.*

The lawmakers – along with hundreds of church leaders, local officials, educators and members of civil organizations – claim “a wave of assassinations, abductions and political attacks” have targeted parties that won congressional seats in 2004. These include Bayan Muna (People First), Anakpawis (Toiling Masses) and the Gabriela Women’s Party.

Their “Statement of Concern on the Killings of Political Activists” said violence since 2001 has claimed the lives of 51 members of Bayan Muna, 17 members of Anakpawis and two members of Gabriela. “Just as alarming,” they added, “is the number of other civilians, mostly peasant folk, slain on mere suspicion of leftist links.”

The statement said military and police officials have been implicated, but “(n)ot one has been brought to justice; the most notorious have even been promoted.” The complete statement can be found on the website of the online news magazine Bulatlat at: <http://www.bulatlat.net/statements/5-12/5-12-killings.html>

(Also see “Philippines: 27 party members killed,” *NewsNotes* November/December 2002.)

The victims represented diverse backgrounds, including a city councilor, a radio broadcaster, a Protestant minister and a human rights lawyer. The statement said each was committed to fighting for social justice, and all were affiliated with legal organizations “that have become the object of vilification by those who invoke the mantra of ‘national security’ to suppress the voices of dissent.”

Besides those killed, at least two prominent human rights lawyers survived assassination attempts while helping their clients seek justice.

The statement said official military documents that tag militant organizations as a “national security problem” bolster suspicions that official policy sanctions the use of summary execution and other human rights violations against political activists. “The escalating crackdown on activists is but part of a larger pattern of

impunity – in a country where extrajudicial killings have become the norm, victimizing even journalists and entire Muslim communities,” the statement said.



In a separate statement, Bayan Muna officials said the attacks were directed against political parties and civil organizations “critical of the United States and Philippine governments’ policies favoring war, globalization and the curtailment of the people’s civil, economic and political rights.” By the government’s silence and inaction, they said, “President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is sending signals that it tolerates, if not encourages,” those actions.

“These attacks are meant to destroy democratic, progressive parties and organizations in the Philippines and stifle political dissent,” the officials added. “They are essentially attacks against the democratic rights of the people and the will of the electorate. They are attacks on representative democracy itself.”

The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) said all of the victims “were persons critical of the government. In response, government and army officials have labelled the victims communist sympathizers...”

“(B)y implication, killing an alleged communist is not a crime in the Philippines,” the AHRC added. “A further conclusion is that killing members of legitimate opposition parties or human rights activists is also permitted.”

The Hong Kong-based human rights commission said the Marcos regime similarly labeled its political opponents “as communist sympathisers as a means to open the way for unrestrained violence against them. The legacy of that era continues to poison Philippine society...”

“(O)f bitter disappointment since the recent attacks is the apparent unwillingness of the current administration to do anything to address this trend,” the AHRC said. “The combined effect of its inaction and unhelpful public statements is to suggest that the killing of political opponents and human rights activists is of no concern, and may even be beneficial to the country’s internal security and social order. These are exactly the same premises upon which Marcos based his bloody governance.”

Reverting to old labeling tactics and failing to act

on recent killings is “an extremely dangerous game, and one that could easily escalate out of control within a short time,” the AHRC warned.

“The government of the Philippines is now faced with a very serious new threat to the protection of human rights and democracy in the country. So far its response has been characterised by inaction and a lack of proper direction over the army and other authorities, which acting in their own interests have made the situation worse,” the AHRC said. It urged the government to show that the killing of human rights defenders and political opponents will not be tolerated.

### **Faith in action:**

Write to Ambassador Albert F. Del Rosario at the Philippine Embassy, 1600 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 (fax 202-467-9417). Ask that the government conduct a full investigation into the killing of members of political parties and other legal organizations. Urge the government to provide protection to witnesses, and to demand that the armed forces stop labeling political opponents as “communist sympathizers,” which endangers their human rights and runs counter to democratic processes.

## **Burma: Junta might postpone taking ASEAN chair**

*Myanmar, under fire for its human rights record, might postpone assuming the chairmanship of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) next year, but the ruling junta has not made its intentions clear.*

Lawmakers in the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia have urged their governments to oppose Myanmar serving in the rotating chairmanship. However, some diplomats say Myanmar is more likely to withdraw in a face-saving move, provided there is no outside pressure.

“Only we can decide. It is still very early,” Myanmar Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs U Maung Myint told news media June 4 in Singapore. Asked whether Myanmar – the junta’s preferred name for Burma – would give in to international pressure and relinquish the ASEAN chair, he said, “No, we are preparing another situation.” He declined to elaborate.

ASEAN members – Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam – traditionally do not interfere in one another’s internal affairs.

Myanmar has been run by a military junta since 1962. It has attracted international criticism for its poor human rights record, notably for its continued house arrest of Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. The U.S. and the European Union have said they would boycott ASEAN meetings hosted by Myanmar because of its record.

Several Philippine senators raised the issue of Myanmar’s chairmanship with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. However, she told a news conference the government would not pursue a diplomatic

initiative against Myanmar because the Philippines stood to gain. A Myanmar withdrawal would mean the Philippines would assume the ASEAN chairmanship in 2006 – a year earlier than normal under the alphabetical rotation.

In May, 78 of 200 Thai senators asked their government to pressure Myanmar into declining the ASEAN chairmanship. The issue had also been discussed in the Malaysian Parliament, where debate was stopped April 28.

“We want Yangon [Rangoon] to make its own decision on the matter after taking into account the views expressed,” according to Malaysia Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar. “We are trying for a voluntary withdrawal, a recuse, by the Myanmar government, but we can’t have outside pressure if this is going to work.”

Sihasak Phuanketkeow, a Thai Foreign Ministry spokesman, said, “I think the Myanmar side is aware of the situation and the complications it could cause if, under the present circumstances, Myanmar takes up the chair. I am sure, at the present time, Myanmar wants to concentrate on its internal priorities.”

ASEAN ministers could reach a decision on how to handle the issue when the chairmanship passes from Laos to Malaysia at a summit meeting in July in the Laotian capital of Vientiane.

Former Thai deputy Foreign Minister Sukhumbhand Paribatra urged that, whatever the outcome, Myanmar should not lose face. Kishore Mahbubani, dean of Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy and former Singapore ambassador to the UN, agreed. “Behind the scenes, people are working on a solution,” he said. “The key thing is that nobody is humiliated.”

## China: Lax safety boosts coal mining fatalities

*As China's growing economy spurs the demand for energy, fatalities in coal mine accidents have dramatically increased.*

Coal accounts for an estimated 70 percent of China's power needs. Meanwhile, fires and other accidents killed 1,113 coal miners during the first quarter of 2005, up 21 percent from a year earlier, according to Li Yizhong, a top Chinese industrial safety official. In the worst accident, an explosion at Sunjiwan colliery in February killed 214 miners – China's deadliest coal mine accident since 1949.

China produces 35 percent of the world's coal, but it suffers 80 percent of mine casualties worldwide. The death rate for producing 100 tons of coal in China is 10 times that of India, and 100 times that of the U.S. On an average of once a week, more than 10 lives are lost in a single mining accident in China.

The Chinese government has adopted extensive safety standards for coal mines. For example, a 131-page document comprising 751 articles on "Rules and Procedures on Coal Mining Safety" was issued in 2004. However, the China Labour Bulletin (CLB), a Hong Kong-based organization promoting labor rights in China, said the more urgent need is to implement already existing laws on workplace safety.

The CLB also said unless workers are allowed to set up independent trade unions and worker safety committees, the health and safety of workers – especially in high-risk industries such as coal mining – cannot be effectively protected.

China's economy grew 9.5 percent last year, fueling huge energy demand. This, in turn, pushed up the price of coal and gave rise to thousands of small mines – many of them illegal. Government statistics for 2004 show that 24,000 of China's 28,000 coal mines are small operations. Many owners of small mines, where most accidents occur, are seemingly indifferent to safety rules. As one coal industry expert says, "More than 90 percent of small coal mines should be shut down for safety reasons, as their poor facilities cannot meet safety standards."

The CLB said the central government ordered the closure of thousands of small coal mines in 2001 in an effort to curb accidents, but there has been little change. Duo Qingfeng, president of the China Coal Information Institute, said many small coal mines are closely connected with local governments, and in some areas local governments are financially dependent on the mines.

Stephen Frost, a research fellow at the City University of Hong Kong, said mine owners often play the role of government safety inspectors, causing a serious conflict of interest in the enforcement of existing regulations.

After the Sunjiwan catastrophe, CLB research director Robin Munro said, "The conclusion we've got to draw is that there's no real enforcement. ... There's just lots of paper being put out by the central government."

Conflict of interest can also be seen from the low compensation miners receive. CLB director Han Dongfang said many workers are ignorant of the law and sign contracts providing for limited compensation in case of an accident. "They have no bargaining power at all, and there is no independent labor union to help them," he said.

After the 214 miners died at Sunjiwan, the official trade union did little to aid the victims' families. Although the mining company initially announced that it would give each bereaved family 200,000 yuan (\$25,000) in compensation, the affected families learned later that each would receive only 80,000 yuan in compensation, while the remainder would have to come from community donations.

A retired miner from the Sunjiwan colliery said the compensation package was set by the government, and the affected families could not challenge the amount they received. Approached by the CLB, a union spokesperson said he was "not sure about the details of the compensation arrangements."

The Asian Center for the Progress of Peoples indicates there has been no letup in coal mining accidents. A deadly blast May 19 at the Nuanerhe mine in Hebei province claimed 45 lives. The mine was reportedly operating without a safety license and had been warned to stop work.

### **Faith in action:**

Write to Mr. Wen Jiabao, Premier of the People's Republic of China; General Office of the State Council; 2 Fuyou St., Xicheng District, Beijing 100017, People's Republic of China. Send copies to Mr. Li Yizhong, Minister, State Administration for Work Safety, at [aqj@chinasafety.gov.cn](mailto:aqj@chinasafety.gov.cn). Express your concern over safety conditions for Chinese coal miners, and ask that safety regulations be strictly enforced. Insist that just compensation be paid to survivors when a family member has died in a mining accident. For the safety of the Maryknoll missionaries in China, please do not mention Maryknoll in your correspondence.



## Middle East: Shape of Palestinian state awaits peace

*The RAND Corp. document "Helping a Palestinian State Succeed," on which this article is based, combines material from two RAND studies: "Building a Successful Palestinian State" and "The Arc: A Formal Structure for a Palestinian State." The three documents can be found at [www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org).*

While proposals abound to help advance the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians, the RAND Corp. has gone a step further by sponsoring a study that describes what a Palestinian state might look like after a peace accord is signed.

The non-profit think tank disavows any political motives. For example, the authors declare that "we have chosen for the purposes of this study to set the question of Israeli settlements aside."

However, the work cites considerations that would bear heavily on the success or failure of a Palestinian state. These include good governance along with "economic and social development, territorial size and its contiguity, the status of Jerusalem, and the freedom of refugees to resettle in Palestine."

(These are also among key criteria in the peace process as set forth in the Road Map, which aims to achieve a viable Palestinian state side by side with Israel with a fair, negotiated resolution of borders, refugees, status of Jerusalem – and settlements. While target dates in the Road Map have been missed, President Bush now says he hopes to see a Palestinian state established by 2009.)

The RAND researchers describe major challenges a future Palestinian state would have to address, including water resources, projected population growth and some degree of integration of the Palestinian and Israeli economies. They note that, currently, "water resource development provides only about one-half of the World Health Organization's per-capita domestic water requirement and limits irrigation and food production. In addition, current water use is unsustainable: The amount of water that the Palestinians and Israelis extract from most of the region's aquifers exceeds the natural replenishment rate."

The researchers also note that, with more than 3.6 million people living on just over 2,300 square miles, the West Bank and Gaza together have a population density of more than 1,400 people per square mile. They project that with natural growth and immigration, the population will increase to more than six million in the next 15 years, pushing the density to 2,400 people per square

mile and surpassing the density even in Bangladesh. (They report that Gaza's population density is already 9,200 people per square mile.)

The researchers also say that "(d)ecisions about the degree of economic integration with Israel in terms of trade and the mobility of Palestinian labor will shape the Palestinian economy, the rate of economic growth, and prospects for employment."

In general, the authors say, a new Palestinian state "will start with a physical infrastructure that is inadequate to meet the needs of its current population, let alone accommodate a large number of returning refugees."

In response, researchers conceived a development plan that roughly follows an arc of mountain ridges, most of them 2,000-2,500 feet high, that divides the West Bank. Most of the West Bank's major communities are built west of the ridges, where higher rainfall is more conducive to agriculture than east of the slopes.

Architects propose linking major communities with a corridor, or an arc, comprising a high-speed, 140-mile rail line, highway, aqueduct, energy grid and fiber optic cable. The rail line would link the primary cities of the West Bank and Gaza in just over 90 minutes. In addition, an international airport and a seaport are envisioned for Gaza.

The researchers estimate it would cost \$33 billion in the first ten years of a new Palestinian state to implement their recommendations, including \$6 billion to build the arc's core rail and road infrastructure. They also project that building those components would provide Palestinians with 100,000-160,000 jobs per year for five years.

While the high-speed rail line would link major Palestinian cities along the arc, its designers propose locating the stations several miles from the historic centers of the communities. The placement of stations outside of present community centers is meant to encourage linear expansion along the new artery, with the addition of public transit to meet local demand. It would also discourage overcrowding of existing centers.

Just how soon such a proposal could be implemented depends on the pace of peace negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. The arc proposal is "clearly a long, long way from where we are today," says Nigel Roberts, World Bank director for the West Bank and Gaza. "But you have to have these templates of what the future could look like so you can work backward from that."

## Sudan: Humanitarian disaster in Darfur

*As he peers down the barrel of his ancient, Russian-made machine gun, Rwanda-born Emanuel Ndagijimana epitomizes the constraints and expectations faced by the African Union's (AU) first-ever peacekeeping force. The following account of the role of the AU in Darfur is from the United Nations' Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN).*

At 22, the Rwandan soldier is one of 2,370 AU peacekeepers helping to maintain a shaky ceasefire in Darfur, western Sudan, the scene of what the UN has called "one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters." Around him are peacekeepers from Chad, Senegal, Kenya and South Africa.

The AU force is an army that has begged and borrowed its way into existence. But the peacekeepers, who many wrote off even before they set foot in dusty Darfur, are beginning to win international praise.

Although the peacekeepers are stretched beyond their limited capacity in trying to cover a region the size of France, violence has actually tapered off in the areas where they have been deployed.

The AU force is due to triple its ranks to 7,700 troops and civilian police, at a cost to the international community of US \$466 million.

When the AU troops first arrived in 2004, they had no equipment or logistical support, but the adaptability of this military force was its greatest strength.

The force's flexible nature has also helped the peacekeepers tackle the ever-changing nature of Darfur's complex conflict, which is now moving away from fighting between rebels and government forces to include other dimensions. For instance, [Ndagijimana] said, food shortages have begun to influence the trend of the war, with banditry and robbery on the rise as armed groups searched for food.

Violence in Darfur erupted in February 2003 when rebels took up arms against what they saw as years of state discrimination and marginalization of the region's ethnic African inhabitants.

The government is accused of responding with a counterinsurgency in which the ethnic Arab militia, known as "Janjaweed," has committed wide-scale abuses against ethnic Africans.

At least 180,000 people have died [some say as many as 400,000] - many from hunger and disease - and more than two million others have fled the region.

The commander of the AU force in Darfur, Maj. Gen. Festus Okonkwo, said his lightly armed troops

were no match for Sudanese rebels and government soldiers, whom he said were armed with rocket launchers and truck-mounted heavy machine guns.

Since the start of the operation, two of his men have been shot and ten others kidnapped and held for a day and a half. Aid workers were increasingly falling victim to attack, he said.

He dismissed criticism that his peacekeepers were failing to curb assaults, blaming a lack of equipment for hampering their effectiveness.

In the coming months, the peacekeeping force is expected to receive attack helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft to transport troops and more than 100 armored personnel carriers.

Robert Zoellick, the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, during a recent visit to Darfur, said that the security situation in the region was improving, but that more police were needed to protect civilians in and around the camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

He also said a "strong message" must to be sent to the Khartoum government to disarm the militias operating in Darfur.

Currently, there are 462 AU police in the region, a force the AU hoped to expand to 815 by the end of June. By September some 1,500 police should be in the region.

Now, the police return to the safety of their bases at night, and patrols begin again the following morning. By the end of the month, however, AU police are expected to be deployed round the clock in half of the region's 65 main camps, which are home to an estimated 1.6 million IDPs.

The AU is the only governing body to put troops on the ground in Darfur, an operation that could determine the fate of the 53-nation block.

### **Faith in action:**

In commemoration of the 400,000 people who have died in Darfur, Africa Action is circulating a petition drive for 400,000 signatures to a letter to U.S. decision makers, demanding that the U.S. government do everything necessary through the UN to ensure an urgent multinational intervention to protect civilians in Darfur. They hope to gather all the signatures by September 9. To sign, please go to [www.africaaction.org](http://www.africaaction.org) and click on the box on the right side of the page. If you do not have access to the internet, please contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns for a hard copy to be mailed to you.

## Zimbabwe: Mass evictions of most vulnerable

*A government-led eviction campaign that began in Harare in late May and was officially billed as an operation “to rid the capital of illegal structures, businesses and criminal activities,” was described by one observer in the following way: “... [W]hat we are seeing goes beyond plunder. There is massive destruction of livelihoods. People who have lost their means of livelihood, their small capital and their homes are flocking out of the towns. They are going to rural areas which are already experiencing hunger, two months after the harvest ...”*

Another observer wrote from a few miles outside of Harare: “During the week of June 7, the people were forced to tear down what the government was classifying as illegal structures. More than 140,000 people were rendered homeless. My own personal feeling upon seeing the area for the first time since the demolition exercise was that it resembled a war zone.

“It is thus estimated that approximately 100,000 of this displaced population have moved into the main house of the premises where they were lodgers or have found accommodation elsewhere in the area. From this number it is estimated that 40,000 are children, 20,000 are the elderly and approximately 40,000 adults. Of the remaining estimated 40,000 displaced, it is thought that approximately half have made their way to the rural areas, though it is far from clear whether they will be accepted there. The remaining 20,000 are either camped out on top of the rubble of their former abode or at one of three main churches in the area accommodating these people. ...

“Much infrastructure has been demolished (i.e., a petrol station, grinding mills and numerous shops) in the

area. Too, without the vendors being able to operate in the area, there is a shortage of food as well, for there is only one ‘legal’ supermarket that serves the entire area.

“What is particularly worrying is that many of the ‘survivors’ of this disaster are elderly widows who depended on the income from the cottages on their premises, within a very short time they and the orphans they are caring for will be in grave danger due to lack of resources.”

According to IRIN (May 30), the housing shortage mixed with grinding poverty had led to the common practice of home owners renting out overcrowded illegal shacks, built literally in their backyards, to families scrambling to make a living in the city.

Meanwhile, basic food prices rocketed and the cost of a monthly basic needs basket for a family of six went from Zim \$2.3 million (US\$268) in April to Zim \$4 million (US\$467) at the end of May - well beyond the minimum wage.

On June 1, IRIN reported that the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights) and the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human rights had filed for a stay of the eviction of informal settlers in and around Harare, claiming that many had papers to prove that they were legal occupants with lease agreements.

Other reactions were equally strong. The UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) called for an “immediate” halt to the evictions. Miloon Kothari, special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, reminded the Zimbabwean government that forced evictions constituted a “gross violation of human rights.” Ambassador Anna Tibaijuka was named by the UN as Special Envoy for Human Settlements Issues in Zimbabwe to review the situation.

### Statement from the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops’ Conference:

We, the members of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference, issued a press statement on June 2, 2005, in regard to the ‘clean up’ operation, dubbed ‘Operation Restore Order’ in which we expressed our dismay at the suffering and hardship experienced by the most vulnerable members of society in some areas nationwide. Now, almost four weeks after the event, countless numbers of men, women with babies, children of school age, the old and the sick, continue to sleep in the open air at winter temperatures near to freezing. These people urgently need shelter, food, clothing, medicines, etc. Any claim to justify this operation in view of a desired orderly end becomes totally groundless in view of the cruel and inhumane means that have been used. People have a right to shelter and that has been deliberately destroyed in this operation without much warning. While we all desire orderliness, alternative accommodation and sources of income should have been identified and provided before the demolitions and stoppage of informal trading. We condemn the gross injustice done to the poor.

## Brazil: Scandals hinder Lula's administration

*The Brazilian government has been racked by a series of corruption scandals that many social movements – church groups; NGOs; unions; of farmers, Afro-Brazilians, womens and students organizations – worry may result in conservative parties increasing their power within the coalition that supports the president's Workers' Party (PT). President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (Lula), a founding member of the PT, was elected in 2002 after losing three previous elections for the same position. In order to gain political support necessary for the election, the PT formed alliances with conservative parties, which has resulted in a difficult to maintain coalition of forces within the government.*

In its first two and a half years in power, the Lula government has implemented a mixture of progressive and conservative policies. On the international front, it has maintained a more independent posture in relation to free trade accords like the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), while working to increase South-South relationships through stronger ties with African, Asian and other Latin American countries. Internally, however, it has passed a series of structural (neoliberal) reforms that the PT historically had fought against, such as the partial privatization of social security and bankruptcy reform, and is working for other unpopular reforms of education, workers' rights and unions. This dichotomy of actions represents the internal struggles taking place within the government between the coalition forces. Social movements are concerned that, as a result of these recent scandals, the conservative forces will increase their force within the government.

The first scandal, which came to light in 2003, involved a trusted assistant to Jose Dirceu, the president's chief of staff, who extorted money from a clandestine lottery director for political campaigns for members of the PT and allied parties. The government was able to avoid a Congressional investigation of the case, but the PT's image as an ethical and honest party was tarnished, and Dirceu's reputation was damaged.

A second scandal began earlier this year when a video on national television showed an executive of the postal system, Mauricio Marinho, receiving money from a private company in exchange for contracts with the postal service. During the video, Marinho detailed a bribery scheme, supposedly orchestrated by Roberto Jefferson, president of the PTB, an allied party of the Lula government, which involved other state-run com-

panies. In a television interview about the accusations, Jefferson, in an attempt to deflect attention from his involvement, introduced a new scandal saying that the PT, since the beginning of its time in office, has been paying close to \$12,500 per month to as many as 101 representatives and senators from two allied parties, the Progressive Party (PP) and Liberal Party (PL), for them to vote in favor of PT initiatives.

Despite the fact that Jefferson has not presented any proof of his accusations, the resulting scandal has dominated the political agenda. No one has strongly denied the accusations and many politicians and aides have commented that they had heard about the illegal payments, but also have no proof. Congress already has begun an investigation of the postal scandal and will start an investigative panel of the paying off of legislators as early as July.

The first victim of the crisis was Jose Dirceu, Lula's chief of staff and longtime personal friend, who left his position to return to his position as representative of the state of Sao Paulo to which he was elected in 2002. Dirceu was a strong center-left voice within the schizophrenic Cabinet. Some, like Minister of the Environment Marina Silva, represent the PT's historical progressive past, while others such as Roberto Rodrigues (Agriculture), Luiz Furlan (Development, Industry and External Commerce) and Antonio Palocci (Economic Policy) favor strong neoliberal policies. The president of the Central Bank is Henrique Meirelles, a former president of the Bank of Boston, Brazil's largest private creditor. With conservatives in such key positions, the loss of Dirceu was especially worrisome to social movements.

While the scandals have lowered Brazilians' confidence in the Lula government – in opinion polls, the percentage of people rating the government as good or great has fallen from 41 percent to 35 percent since the beginning of the year – many believe that Lula himself may have been unaware of the payments being made to the legislators. When he learned about the latest scandal, aides report that he cried and ordered that the payments to legislators be stopped. Lula continues to be seen positively by the majority of the Brazilian people and as a hope for fundamental change by the social movements. In response to the scandal, over 50 movements released a "Letter to the Brazilian People" in which they defend Lula, demand a full investigation of the corruption scandals and punishment of the guilty parties, and call for a series economic policy changes such as lowering

interest rates (currently 19.75 percent, the highest in the world), redirecting part of Brazil's debt payment to social spending; and political reforms such as public financing of elections, increased public overview of state agencies and the use of direct voting through referendums and plebiscites. The letter calls on all Brazilian

citizens to go to the streets in favor of these demands. As Joao Pedro Stedile, spokesperson for the movements, said, "The only certainty of the possibility for changes ... is if workers organize independently, mobilize and struggle for changes. Never has any government given anything for free."

## El Salvador: Remembering the martyrs

*Twenty-five years ago, on August 23, 1980, Maryknoll Sisters Carla Piete and Ita Ford were driving in a jeep with two seminarians, taking home a newly released prisoner of the security forces. They were caught in a flash flood as they crossed the El Zapote River near Chalatenango. Carla pushed Ita out the window of the jeep but she herself was unable to escape. Her body was found the next morning, 13 kilometers downstream. She was named a martyr of charity by the Salvadoran people because she gave her life working for a people living in great hardship.*

On December 2, 1980, a few months after Carla died and nine months after the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero, Ita herself, with another Maryknoll sister, Maura Clarke, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and Cleveland mission team lay member Jean Donovan, was abducted by members of the Salvadoran National Guard, raped and killed. Their fate – violent death - matched that already met by thousands of Salvadorans; many more would follow. The intellectual authors of these crimes were never brought to justice. In fact, shortly after the women were murdered, two high level officials suspected of involvement in the crime – at least in the cover-up – were given asylum and permanent residency status in the United States. The U.S. continued to train, advise and supply the Salva-

doran security forces with the tools of their deadly trade.

That these women are called martyrs is a statement of faith, made not because they died brutally or were killed by soldiers, but because they struggled alongside the poor for justice and dignity. As Salvadoran Sister Noemi Ortiz says, "They poured out their lives as a candle does, giving light." (see *Like Grains of Wheat*, Orbis 2004)

Since false idols yet abound that threaten and destroy the image of God in the human person and the integrity of creation, our focus will be on the work that is still to be done to help create the kind of world to which the U.S. churchwomen and thousands of others gave their lives.

Each month during 2005, the Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland are promoting specific actions for social justice. (See [www.ursulinesisters.org](http://www.ursulinesisters.org)). A Maryknoll Mission Education campus ministry delegation visited El Salvador in June 2005. Special events are being planned for December 2005 in Cleveland, at Maryknoll, NY and in El Salvador.



### **Faith in action:**

Support the monthly actions for justice prepared by the Ursuline Sisters, [www.ursulinesisters.org](http://www.ursulinesisters.org). Join a Maryknoll delegation to El Salvador in December.

Maryknoll-sponsored **Friends Across Borders** will lead a delegation to El Salvador in December 2005. Maryknoll lay missionaries in San Salvador will host the group, which will have the opportunity to participate in a series of activities around the 25th anniversary of the martyrdom of the church women. The group will also visit the ministries of the Maryknoll Lay Missioners and other Maryknoll missionaries as well to see the site of Monseñor Oscar Romero's 1980 murder and the Central America University, where the six Jesuits and two women were killed in 1989. Total cost per person will be \$ 1,825. **Deadline to signup: August 1.** Contact Cecilia Espinoza for additional information at 414-967-1055 or visit [www.friendsacrossborders.org](http://www.friendsacrossborders.org)

## Guatemala: Community votes on mining activities

*On June 18, 2005, a community consultation took place in the municipality of Sipacapa, San Marcos, Guatemala, to determine the population's position on mining exploration and exploitation activities in their territory. In a statement released in advance of the consultation, the Canadian mining company with concessions in San Marcos, Glamis Gold, called the referendum "illegal and unconstitutional" – an "undemocratic and abusive process."*

Sipacapa is one of the two municipalities directly affected by Glamis Gold's Marlin Project. As it is currently being constructed, the majority of the company's installations and the mine itself are located within the borders of San Miguel Ixtahuacán; however, the processing facilities are planned for Sipacapa, as are some of the water sources to be used by the company. Communities in Sipacapa are also expected to be among the worst affected due to the geography.

As of July 31, 2003, the Guatemalan Ministry of Energy and Mines had approved and granted 247 mining exploration licenses, 255 mining exploitation licenses, and 21 applications for prospecting. Mining activity is taking place all over the country, with mining exploration and exploitation licenses granted in 16 departments and 106 municipalities. In the department of San Marcos one exploitation license and five mining exploration licenses were granted, directly affecting the municipalities of Concepción Tutuapa, Ixchiguan, San Marcos, San Miguel Ixtahuacán, San Pedro Sacatepéquez, Sibinal, Sipacapa, Tacaná, Tajumulco, Comitancillo, Tejutla, and San José Ojetenam.

The Ministry of Energy and Mines recently granted new 10 mining licenses to Entre Mares, another subsidiary of Glamis Gold, for a project called Máquivil in the department of San Marcos.

Observers of the consultation Daniel Vogt, Angela Fallow and Tanya Stroedel reported that "the consultations occurred as planned on June 18 without the official support or participation of the municipal mayor or his council, who feared facing charges of violating a judicial order for participation the process.

"In the consultative process there were two models used. In the municipal centre, the local population decided to cast paper ballots, writing the word 'si' or 'no' to indicate their opinion regarding the future of mining activities in the township. In 12 rural centers community assemblies were conducted. The traditional Mayan consensus building model was followed. In one of the 12

centers the results favored mining and in 11 centers the opinion was of opposition. The initial interpretation seems that indigenous participants in the process tended to voice opposition to the proposed mining projects, whereas nonindigenous participants supported local mining activity.

"The low level of participation was influenced by three factors: conflicting and confusing press reports prior to the consultation, street broadcasts and leafleting (attributed to the mining company) announcing that the consultation was canceled, and the rainy and cold weather. According to press reports, approximately 2,600 persons participated in the consultation process, compared to 5,200 registered voters out of a total population of nearly 15,000. It remains unclear whether this level of participation will be recognized as 'representative' of the population."

According to the observers, in two separate lawsuits Glamis Gold and the Ministry of Energy and Mines challenged the legal basis for the consultation process and the possibility that the results may be binding throughout the jurisdiction.

In the first case, Montana Exploradora, Glamis Gold's subsidiary in Guatemala, brought a case against the municipal government of Sipacapa resulting in an injunction, issued on June 15, prohibiting the municipal government from undertaking the community consultation process. Their argument was that this hybrid model of consultation provides results beyond the jurisdiction of the municipal government and the convention.

The core issue is whether the municipal government has the legal power to void a mining license within its territorial limits. The Guatemalan Constitutional Court will decide whether to uphold or dismiss the injunction within 15 days of its issuance. It appears likely that the injunction will be upheld.

In the second case, the Ministry of Energy and Mining argued before the Constitutional Court that the consultative process planned by the municipal government of Sipacapa was a violation of the Guatemalan Constitution because that model was not explicitly mentioned therein.

However, the Constitutional Court ruled that the consultation process planned by the municipality was constitutional, given that it was recognized by Convention 169. The court said that the consultative process is acceptable since it reflects a traditional method of indigenous problem solving.

## Bolivia: Once again on the precipice

*Following the resignation of ex-President Carlos Mesa, days of pressure and the killing of a 52-year-old miner, the presidents of the Bolivian Senate, Vaca Diez, and of the Bolivian House, Mario Cossio, agreed to step aside in favor of Supreme Court Chief Justice Eduardo Rodriguez, who assumed the presidency on June 10. Rodriguez will call for presidential elections as soon as possible. Whoever wins that election, the date of which has not yet been determined, will have to address the demands of the indigenous movement for greater domestic control of the nation's natural resources and even deeper demands for the redistribution of power in the country. In the midst of the turmoil in Bolivia, Maryknoll Father Steve Judd, who lives in Cochabamba, offered some analysis of the situation and personal reflections. An edited version follows. For his entire paper, which provides an excellent analysis of three major points of contention in Bolivia – regional autonomy, natural gas and petroleum resources, and the Constitution — contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, [ogc@maryknoll.org](mailto:ogc@maryknoll.org).*

“In Bolivia anything can happen and yet nothing will happen” - so goes a popular saying that has come to the forefront recently as the country teeters on the edge of yet another crisis that threatens to throw all semblance of civic and political life into total disarray. On the one hand it is a way to say that everything is going to be all right despite the gravity of the present situation that has placed the country up against the wall ... On the other hand, it's a way of saying don't hedge your bets on any kind of positive outcome of what has become an almost impossible situation of breakdown and free fall placing everything up for grabs. In the Andean world this is known as a *pachakuti*, a phrase to say that the world has been turned upside down.

What is at stake is the very existence of Bolivia as it has been since independence and throughout its turbulent history. Unlike the previous crises of the past five years, including the Water War of 2000 and the two defining moments of February and October 2003, the stakes this time are much higher and the issues far more complex to unravel, not only for outside observers but for those reliable analysts within the country like the Oblate priest and social analyst Gregorio Iriarte, who confesses not to have the slightest idea where things are headed. Chaos and collapse are words heard more frequently. Columnists speak of a culture of violence carried out by rival tribes in every region of the country

borne out in class and race based acts of random and not so random violence.

Most agree that there are few options left as every institution or leader elected or otherwise seems unable to cope with the competing claims of so many social movements located in the poorer less developed western part of the country and the demands of disparate regions in the east like Santa Cruz and Tarija where the majority of the wealth and natural resources are concentrated ...

[T]he resurgent social movements are concentrated in La Paz and El Alto and in Santa Cruz, although they are strikingly different not only in their racial and social class make-up but in the nature of their demands. Indigenous in identity the movements in La Paz make their claims on a range of issues from the nationalization of natural resources to the Constitutional Assembly to localized issues with a mixture of street protests and blockades but with increasing boldness talk of seizing the Congressional building. In Santa Cruz the movements convened by and coalescing around the civic committees are more focused on the single issue of regional autonomy. Both share a common commitment to mobilize large numbers of people as did the Santa Cruz Civic Committee in late January of this year with a protest march of over 300,000 people.

The general populace in the midst of the turmoil either stands by indifferently, seeks individual solutions and survival strategies, or remains silent, unable to confront an uncontrollable situation. Because of these recent developments the economic vital signs are dismal. Small businesses and assembly plants in places like El Alto have fled or closed down. Larger business enterprises barely operate. A recent poll points to the fact that, given a choice, 60 percent of Bolivians would opt to emigrate outside the country. Spain, Argentina and the United States are listed as the most commonly preferred destinations. One million Bolivians reside in Argentina.

How to unpack all the issues and the scenarios is a formidable challenge for political and social analysts as well as for those committed to the cause of social justice and intercultural dialogue, but center around three main points of contention before the Congress: a referendum on regional autonomy, the law regulating the natural gas and petroleum resources, and the Constitutional Assembly. While each issue has its own particular features, the three are interrelated and have to be treated as a whole to begin to understand the present situation and the few alternatives if Bolivia is to survive as a nation. To delve

into them adequately one must wade through a Byzantine web of clashing views of what people envision as the role of the state and local governments as well as how they understand civic and democratic participation in shaping national identity. When it comes to Bolivia,

most Latin Americanists feel incapable to come up with an incisive analysis for it is the most complex of countries to try to understand. But what happens here could be a harbinger of what could happen elsewhere which makes Bolivia a place to watch more closely.

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## **Honduras: U.S. Congress sends letter to Maduro**

*In June, Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) circulated a letter to her colleagues, asking them to join her in signing a letter to Honduran President Ricardo Maduro. The letter urges Maduro to begin an honest and transparent investigation into the tragic prison fire in San Pedro Sula in May 2004, in which over 100 people were killed. DeLauro was encouraged to lead this effort by her constituent, Maryknoll Father Tom Goekler, who works with current and former gang members in San Pedro Sula. Following is the letter that DeLauro and her colleagues will send to Maduro.*

We write ... to express our support for the leadership that you ... have shown in strengthening respect for human rights and the rule of law in Honduras, after the difficult years of the 1980s. We applaud the progress that Honduras has made in these areas over the last decade. However, we recognize that, like several nations in Central America, Honduras is confronted with serious problems of crime and violence that manifest themselves in organized crime, drug trafficking, and family and domestic violence. Youth gang violence is one particularly visible aspect of this problem.

We understand that protecting public safety must be a top priority of your administration. Public concern about youth gang violence is high, especially after highly publicized incidents such as the December bus massacre, and the police and the judicial system must be independent and effective in their response.

As you develop a government response to youth gang violence, we hope that your approach recognizes that although police and law enforcement efforts are key components, they alone cannot solve the complex problem of youth gang violence. The problem requires a comprehensive approach that includes effective prevention and rehabilitation programs, and that involves communities and community institutions. We hope your government's National Anti-Gang Strategy will include strong prevention and rehabilitation measures.

We are increasingly concerned, however, that some law enforcement efforts to combat crime and violence,

particularly youth gang violence, may be setting back the progress made in human rights and due process. Law enforcement and policing, while deterring crime and catching criminals, must respect the human rights and due process of individuals, including those suspected of, or convicted of, crimes. This includes those suspected or convicted of involvement in maras or gangs.

It is our understanding that Honduras's "Mano-Dura" policies and anti-gang laws have produced only mixed results. Those who provide services to keep youth out of gangs tell us that anti-gang laws define any person with a tattoo as a gang member, making any person with tattoos liable for arrest. The indiscriminate arrest and incarceration of suspected gang members without any formal charges has led to overcrowding of an already overburdened prison system and a sense that police have been given a free hand with suspected gang members. We believe these policies require re-evaluation, especially in light of the May 17, 2004, fire at the El Presido prison in San Pedro Sula, in which 106 youth died in overcrowded prison cells blocks.

This fire, and the lack of a transparent investigation of the causes and procedures followed by prison officials, is of serious concern to us. Reports from human rights organizations and news agencies ... confirm that after the fire broke out, many of the detained individuals were not immediately released from the burning cell-block, and therefore died in the fire. A year later, we have not seen that the government has pursued an adequate or transparent investigation. Nor has it, to our knowledge, taken steps necessary to ensure that such a tragic loss of life does not occur at El Presido or other prisons. We therefore urge a prompt, thorough and transparent investigation of the fire at El Presido.

We share with you the belief that youth gang violence must be addressed. The best way of doing so is through a comprehensive approach that focuses heavily on prevention and rehabilitation, as well as ongoing law enforcement action. Protecting public security can and should take into account the human rights of everyone including alleged and convicted gang members.



## Nicaragua: State of emergency

*In recent months, street violence erupted in Nicaragua over increased energy prices and a disputed increase in bus fares. Despite the facts that many Nicaraguans do not have electricity in their homes, particularly in rural areas, and that 57 percent of Nicaraguan households still cook with firewood, the country is 85 percent dependent on oil for its electricity and almost completely dependent on oil for its transportation system. Envio (May 2005) described the scene in Managua: “flaming tires ..., burning vehicles, barricades of street paving stones, hooded youths launching homemade mortars from university gates and riot police responding with rubber bullets and tear gas ...” Managua bus drivers on strike over disputed fare increases contributed to the fray, attacking universities and their student with rocks and other projectiles.*

Much of the violence was apparently provoked by a small number of students willing to engage the striking bus drivers, but a tradition of students “taking to the streets” is part of Nicaragua’s historical reality and many Nicaraguans were sufficiently frustrated by the impact of rising energy prices to join them.

A three-month state subsidy for the bus drivers was agreed upon to suspend the immediate crisis, but long term solutions are necessary and are especially elusive in the context of rising global oil prices. Envio writes, “Neither courage nor subsidies nor prayers will prevent the worsening of the oil crisis. It could even lead to a mutation in the wasteful individualist, consumer-driven, vehicle-addicted, irresponsible and inequity-insensitive society we have constructed in Nicaragua with the mean and stingy political class in the lead.”

Meanwhile, intense maneuvering characterized the political scene.

On May 30, Nicaraguan President Enrique Bolanos declared a state of emergency in an attempt to stave off another wave of unrest caused by the soaring energy prices. The decree was read over state radio. It suspended parts of the Constitution and imposed a hike of 11.83 percent in electricity bills for consumers of more than 150 kilowatts a month. Bolanos said this would affect 25 percent of the population. According to law, the decree, which would limit the right to protest for 180 days, had to be submitted to the Asamblea Nacional (AN) within 72 hours. It was, and a hostile AN began to look deeply into its implications and legality.

The price increase corresponded to the exact amount requested by Union Fenosa, the Spanish firm that has

privatized the electricity sector. The measure also called for a month-to-month indexing that would allow the company to pass on any further fuel-price increases to the consumer. The smallest consumers would be protected through subsidies financed by value-added taxes.

Negative reaction was immediate from consumers and from the National Congress.

By June 1, according to NotiCen (6/02/05), the people began to protest more vigorously, with violence in the streets. Students and unions were involved in burning a state-owned truck. And the legislature began to react as well. Both parties of the majority coalition firmly rejected the decree, but, rather than taking the matter to a decisive vote, they decided to take advantage of the 45 days they have to debate the matter.

On June 16, Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary-General Jose Miguel Insulza visited Nicaragua to look into the institutional crisis that has plagued Bolanos’ presidency for much of his tenure. In an intense power struggle, the AN has nibbled away at executive branch prerogatives through a series of maneuvers including constitutional reforms. A coalition composed of a faction of Bolanos’ *Partido Liberal Constitucionalista* (PLC) and the opposition *Frente Sandinista para la Liberacion Nacional* (FSLN) have complete control of the legislature at this point.

The latest AN assault on executive powers came when deputies created a *Superintendencia de Servicios Publicos* (SISEP) whose members they have the power to select. This arrangement gave the AN effective control of regulation of the *Institutos de Telecomunicaciones, Energia, Agua, and Acueductos y Alcantarillados*. It is highly unusual that a legislature is a country’s policy-setting branch in these areas. Bolanos responded by having police surround the buildings where the new appointees would work, preventing their entry. He also issued a resolution instructing police and the military to disregard the legislature’s constitutional reforms.

Whether or not the OAS mission succeeds in ameliorating the impasse between the powers, many within civil society trace the fundamental problem to the pact between the FSLN and the PLC faction loyal to former President Arnoldo Aleman (1997-2001) that has given the strange bedfellows a stranglehold on the legislature. (NotiCen 6/16/05)

With national elections scheduled for November 2006, Nicaraguans find themselves in a very painful and difficult place – caught between political failure and unending poverty.

## U.S.-Mexico border: Migrant deaths on the rise

*In May 2005, over 40 people died trying to enter the United States; in the first two weeks of June, 21 people died trying to enter. For the third summer in a row, in an effort to educate national lawmakers about the direct link between U.S. policy and these deaths, the Border Working Group, of which the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is a member, is providing information twice a month to Congressional offices about the reality along the border and the push-and-pull aspects of immigration. These Congressional updates also include the available information about each person who has died trying to cross the southern border in the previous two weeks. Below is the second update for the summer of 2005.*

Last summer, hundreds of U.S. citizens gave up between a week and several months of their time in an attempt to save the lives of migrants crossing the Southern Arizona desert. They lived in Arks of the Covenant, which are welcoming stations that provide food, water, clothing, and medical care to migrants who cross in dangerous desert corridors, in large part due to border enforcement policies that have closed off urban crossings. They distribute shoes and water, ramen noodles and toilet paper that church members and others have donated in an effort to stop these deaths in the desert, which the GAO and several academic studies have linked to U.S. border enforcement strategies. These welcoming stations promise to host even larger numbers of volunteers this summer, and will help even more migrants to survive the blistering heat.

Arks of the Covenant form part of the No More Deaths campaign, which is co-sponsored by a multi-denominational coalition of churches, Peace Brigades International and local and national human rights groups. Volunteers who are motivated by faith and conscience have traveled to be part of this effort from all over the country. They believe that, as citizens, we cannot let any more people die in the desert because of our government's policies. This is one facet of the growing faith-based response to the tragedy that strikes our border with Mexico each summer.

More than 3,000 individuals have perished in the desert, in the mountains, and in rivers and waterways along the U.S./Mexico border [in the past 10 years]. Additional border fencing and other infrastructure projects promise to push this number even higher – already 221 migrants have died attempting to enter the U.S. this year. It is important to note that the deterrence

based strategies which encourage migrants to take dangerous routes into the U.S. have not decreased the number of undocumented immigrants entering the country, and that this number has risen substantially since these policies were introduced.

People from many faith perspectives believe that, regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity that should be respected. Often they are subject to punitive laws and harsh treatment from enforcement officers from both receiving and transit countries. Government policies that respect the basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary. As people of faith, we believe that U.S. government policies that endanger human life by pushing migrants into punishing stretches of desert are contrary to our faith.

Approximately 10.5 million Mexican-born persons currently live in the United States, about 5.5 million of whom reside legally, and the remainder of whom have undocumented status. Each year, an estimated 150,000 Mexican migrants enter the United States without authorization, working in such industries as agriculture, service, entertainment, and construction. The majority of these people have endured the arduous desert trek in search of a better life for their families. Their motivations are no different than the motivations of many of our ancestors – Irish migrants fleeing famine, English, Scandinavian and German migrants fleeing the dislocation of industrialization, and countless others looking for a better life.

According to Judaic-Christian teachings, we judge ourselves as a community of faith by the way we treat the most vulnerable among us. The treatment of migrants challenges the consciences of elected officials, policymakers, enforcement officers, residents of border communities, and providers of legal aid and social services, many of whom share our faith. A broad immigration reform would help to immediately address the humanitarian crisis in the desert, as migrant workers would not be forced to risk their lives in the desert if they are allowed to enter legally. Our faith tells us to welcome the stranger – we support government policies that reflect those values.

*To receive copies of these bi-weekly updates, please contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. They are also found at [www.maryknollogc.org](http://www.maryknollogc.org). For more information about the No More Deaths campaign and the Arks of the Covenant, go to [www.nomoredeaths.org](http://www.nomoredeaths.org).*

# Global good neighbor ethic for foreign policy

*The Global Good Neighbor Initiative, a May 2005 report written for the International Relations Center (IRC) and Foreign Policy in Focus (FPIF), proposes a radically different framework for U.S. foreign policy. It was written by Tom Barry, policy director of the IRC and the founder of FPIF; Salih Booker, executive director of Africa Action and a co-chair of the IRC's board of directors; Laura Carlsen, director of the IRC Americas Program; Marie Dennis, director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and a member of the IRC board; and John Gershman, co-director of FPIF and the director of the IRC Global Affairs Program.*

Seldom, if ever, has U.S. foreign policy been as confusing or as divisive as it is today. The occupation of Iraq, the deepening trade deficit, saber-rattling abroad, and disdain for international cooperation have left the U.S. American public uncertain about what exactly the U.S. government is doing overseas, and why.

Public uncertainty about U.S. actions overseas is not a new phenomenon, certainly not one that's distinctive to the George W. Bush era. The citizenry has frequently questioned whether Washington's foreign policy really serves U.S. interests and truly makes everyone more secure. Especially since the 1890s—when our revolutionary republic began thinking more about expanding the U.S. dominion abroad and less about its own independence, democracy, and freedom—civic apprehensions have shadowed official foreign policy.

Today the “global war on terror” and talk of “regime change” in other countries have sparked criticism from both the political left and right, and many voices have risen to protest these initiatives and demand a change in foreign policy. The president says we should “stay the course.” But the high costs, scant results, and increasing dangers of our current foreign policy course indicate the need for a sharp change in direction.

Can we alter the course of U.S. foreign policy? Has there ever been a model for a dramatic shift away from militarism and unilateralism toward international cooperation and peace?

Fortunately, U.S. foreign policy has another legacy—one that makes us proud and can serve as a model and inspiration for ourselves and others. It is the Good Neighbor policy that President Franklin D. Roosevelt proposed in the 1930s as a fresh perspective on international relations and U.S. foreign affairs. His presidency



(1933-45) marked a dramatic shift in U.S. foreign relations and was characterized by a public repudiation of three decades of imperialism, cultural and racial stereotyping, and military intervention.

In the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) is remembered mostly for his social democratic policies at home and his strong leadership as a wartime president. However, Roosevelt's pre-World War II foreign policy was equally outstanding and quite relevant to today's economic, security, and cultural conflicts.

In his March 1933 inaugural address, Roosevelt announced a new approach to international relations that would become known as his Good Neighbor policy. “I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor—the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others.”

The Good Neighbor policy of the 1930s provides a contrast to the current approach toward international relations—not an anomaly but a perspective deeply rooted in U.S. history. The Good Neighbor period was a time when the United States took a firm stand as a global leader, not a global bully; a time when the United States actively sought to build multilateral cooperation rather than assert global dominance.

Our world has seen major transformations unimagined in the days of the Great Depression and the New Deal. As national and global conditions change, political agendas must also evolve. FDR's Good Neighbor policy cannot be applied as a blueprint for foreign policy today, but the basic principles behind it offer keys to building new international relations that are socially, politically, and environmentally sustainable. ...

## **An ethic, not a doctrine**

The Global Good Neighbor initiative is not a policy doctrine.

U.S. society and the rest of the world have had enough of Washington's “national security doctrines” and “grand strategies” for foreign policy. To answer the question of what in the world we are doing and why we are doing it, we don't need another grandiose scheme. ...

*To read the entire document, or to order a hard copy, contact the International Relations Center at [www.irc-online.org](http://www.irc-online.org) or call 505-388-0208. Write them at P.O. Box 2178, Silver City NM 88062-2178, or email [irc@irc-online.org](mailto:irc@irc-online.org).*

## Continued grave concerns about arms trade

*Two new studies say arms sales by G8 countries to some of the world's poorest and most conflict-ridden nations undermine the struggle against poverty and human rights violations. The Control Arms Campaign reports that G8 nations account for 84 percent of the world's arms exports. Meanwhile, an Amnesty International report focusing on Nepal argues that arms sales can encourage human rights violations, and warns that arms shipments sometimes end up in the wrong hands.*

The report from the Control Arms Campaign said G8 foreign ministers would discuss a UK proposal for an arms trade treaty June 23-24 in London. The proposed treaty, to cover all conventional weapons, would ensure that governments control arms according to international human rights standards. G8 heads of state also planned to hold a summit July 6-8 in Scotland. The G8 comprise Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the UK and the U.S.

The report, entitled "The G8: Global arms exporters – Failing to prevent irresponsible arms transfers," says the U.S. ranked first among the world's conventional arms suppliers from 1996 to 2003 with deliveries worth nearly \$152 billion, or about \$19 billion annually.

The U.S. made significant arms transfers to nations where there are "major and persistent human rights concerns," the report says. Colombia, Egypt, India, Israel, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, and Venezuela are listed.

The report also highlights loopholes and weaknesses in current arms exports controls. It says, for example, that "both France and Germany have exported arms to countries subject to a European Union (EU) arms embargo, such as Myanmar (Burma), China and Sudan. The failure to enforce controls on the transfer of equipment that can be used for torture and ill-treatment applies not only to the French government, but also to the German, Russia, UK and U.S. governments."

Launched by Amnesty International, Oxfam International and the International Action Network on Small Arms in October 2003, the campaign aims to reduce arms proliferation and misuse and to convince governments to introduce a binding arms trade treaty. The report can be found at <http://www.controlarms.org/downloads/globalarmsexporters.pdf>.

The Amnesty International report – "Nepal: Military assistance contributing to grave human rights violations" – says military aid and arms supplies to Nepal

from countries including the U.S. have facilitated the killing, torture and abduction or disappearance of thousands of civilians. It urges withholding military assistance and arms supplies from Nepal until the government takes steps to stop human rights violations and bring those responsible to justice.

The report focuses in particular on military aid, arms transfers and training provided to Nepal's armed forces by other governments during the nine-year armed conflict between Nepalese security forces and the Communist (Maoist) Party of Nepal. It can be found at <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA310472005>.

The report says India, the UK and the U.S. have provided substantial levels of arms, training and other military assistance to Nepal during the conflict.

The report says the conflict has claimed at least 12,000 lives, many of them at the hands of Nepal's security forces. According to Amnesty, army officials say those killed include people suspected of having provided food, shelter or money to the Maoists. Amnesty also says security forces have carried out extrajudicial killings, and it expresses concern about torture and arbitrary arrests and detention by security forces.

The report says Maoist fighters have also been responsible for widespread deliberate killings of civilians, including local government officials and members of political parties. In addition, they have abducted thousands of others, and have regularly staged blockades preventing the free movement of food, medicines and other basic goods.

In November 2004, the U.S. Congress conditioned U.S. military assistance to Nepal on improvements in its human rights record. The U.S. obliged the government of Nepal to cooperate with the National Human Rights Commission by granting access to all places of detention, and to resolve all security related cases involving individuals in government custody. The Nepalese government also had to show that it was taking effective steps to end torture by its security forces, and to prosecute those responsible for human rights violations. Amnesty International says none of those conditions has been met.

According to language on Nepal in the U.S. spending bill for FY 2005, the Secretary of State may waive the four conditions on the basis of U.S. national security reasons. Amnesty says that language raises a concern, "especially in the context of the Nepal government's assertion that the (security forces') operations form part of the global 'war on terror.'"

## New debt cancellation: Step in the right direction?

*At their June 10-11 meeting in London, finance ministers from the Group of Eight (G8) countries reached an agreement to cancel 100 percent of the outstanding debt of eligible heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) to the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Africa Development Bank. The finance ministers' proposal will be presented for adoption to the member countries of the World Bank and IMF at their annual meetings in September.*

The countries' debts would be cancelled once they have reached the "completion point" of the HIPC Initiative, a comprehensive framework that was created in 1996 and revised in 1999 for addressing unsustainable debt. To reach the "completion point," countries must have implemented key macroeconomic policy reforms, maintained economic stability and adopted and implemented a poverty reduction strategy for at least one year.

Currently, 38 countries potentially qualify for assistance under the HIPC initiative; 27 of them already receive some debt relief under the program, but what they have thus far received has not resolved the crisis or contributed in a substantial way to the achievement of the millennium development goal of halving poverty by the year 2015. Of these countries, 18 of them would receive immediate benefits from the new proposal: cancellation of more than \$40 billion debt for a combined savings of about \$1.5 billion a year. These include Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, Bolivia, Guyana, Honduras and Nicaragua.

Reactions to the agreement from debt campaigners around the world were mixed. Some saw the agreement as a huge step toward jubilee; others saw it as flawed but precedent-setting; yet others focused almost completely on what they consider to be fatal flaws. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns believes that the agreement represents a very significant achievement for several specific reasons; that its flaws are likewise specific and very serious; and that it fails to address some of the historical and structural injustices that must be included in any just resolution.

First, the good news: Ten years ago advocates for debt cancellation were told emphatically by World Bank officials that there was no multilateral debt crisis and that if there were, the World Bank and IMF could never cancel debt. They have just agreed to do so. Secondly, cancellation of multilateral debt is crucial for debtor

countries because the World Bank and IMF are paid first, before any other creditors. Thirdly, this new proposal would cancel 100 percent of the debt stock itself rather than only covering the debt service payments and leaving the principal intact.

Next, the flaws:

- The countries eligible to benefit from this proposal represent a small percentage of the countries that require immediate 100 percent cancellation.
- HIPC Initiative criteria, which will be used to determine which countries will qualify for benefits under this program, require countries to implement devastating economic policies that have exacerbated the suffering of the poorest people in impoverished, debtor countries. There is almost no space for economic self-determination.
- The InterAmerican Development Bank and the Asia Development Bank, major creditors to many impoverished countries, were not included in this year's proposal.
- Middle income countries with large impoverished populations and heavy debt burdens should be included in the program also.

And the important historical and structural injustices not addressed at all, including:

- The illegitimacy of much of the debt that was incurred, for example, by brutal dictatorships and unrepresentative governments; for irresponsible projects or projects that were never completed; for creditors' geopolitical interests during the Cold War; at usurious interest rates; or with conditions attached that exacerbated poverty.
- The historical debt owed to now-impoverished countries in the Southern hemisphere for slavery and for the theft of vast mineral wealth during the colonial period.
- The ecological debt of industrialization and fossil-fuel-led development in the North.
- The detrimental position of poor countries in the global economy as it has been structured for at least the last 60 years.

### **Faith in action:**

Write to Treasury Secretary John Snow in support of 100 percent multilateral debt cancellation, but insisting that the list of eligible countries be greatly expanded and that the HIPC framework with its destructive conditionalities be abandoned. U.S. Treasury, 1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20220.

## U.S. energy policy: Senate passes mediocre bill

*The following article is from the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), the Quakers' advocacy office in Washington, D.C., [www.fcnl.org](http://www.fcnl.org).*

The Senate completed most of its work on the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (HR 6/S 10) on June 23. After two weeks of floor debate, senators dealt with all of the 170 amendments one way or another. The final bill passed the Senate June 28 by a vote of 85-12.

Polls show overwhelming public support for action to reduce U.S. oil dependence. The message is beginning to get through - slowly but surely.

Thanks in part to this advocacy, the Senate bill is now a stronger bill than the House version in terms of reducing oil dependence and greenhouse gas emissions. The Senate bill would

- require the administration to submit a plan to reduce U.S. oil dependence by one million barrels per day (about five percent of current daily consumption) by 2015
- provide tax credits for high-efficiency (e.g. hybrid) and alternative fuel vehicles
- expand the production and use of renewable ethanol fuel to eight billion gallons by 2012
- require utilities to produce 10 percent of their electricity from renewable sources by 2020
- provide tax credits for residential installation of solar hot water heating or photovoltaics and the purchase of energy efficient appliances
- provide tax credits for commercial production of electricity from renewable sources
- provide tax credits for energy-efficient homes and commercial buildings
- authorize funding for low-income home weatherization programs
- expand government procurement of high-efficiency and alternative fuel vehicles and renewable energy supplies
- authorize funding for research and development of renewable energy technologies
- provide incentives for industries to develop technologies that emit less greenhouse gas
- commit Congress to draft future legislation to impose mandatory reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.



If provisions such as these survive the House-Senate conference committee and are subsequently fully funded and implemented, it will be a small, but constructive step toward reducing U.S. oil dependence and greenhouse gas emissions. But none of these steps are assured, and, prospects for new funding are exceedingly slim.

Does this bill go far enough, fast enough for the public good - to prevent future wars over oil, to reduce energy demand, to meet future energy needs, to slow global warming, and to restore the environment?

No. Like the House bill, the Senate bill places the greatest emphasis on increasing domestic energy supplies rather than on reducing

energy demand. Expanding domestic energy production primarily from oil, gas, coal, and nuclear fuels remains the top priority. Amendments to reduce dependence and emissions more dramatically and sooner were soundly defeated, including amendments to reduce oil imports by 40 percent by 2025, increase automobile fuel efficiency from 25 miles per gallon to 40 by 2016, and mandate extremely modest reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

On the whole, the Senate has chosen to deny the urgency and importance of reducing oil dependence and greenhouse gas emissions and to ignore the viable opportunities that exist today to pursue a more secure, safe, clean, and sustainable energy future for our country and world. Like the House bill, this bill remains largely stuck in the industries and ideas of the past.

Would this bill do more harm than good?

It's probably a wash. Greater environmental harm is sure to result from many of the oil, gas, coal, and nuclear provisions, and it's hardly in the public interest to be providing subsidies and tax breaks to industries that are making record profits today. Proposed investment in so-called "clean coal" technologies would likely result in a net environmental benefit compared to the status quo, albeit in an industry that is on the whole quite harmful to the environment.

However, the compelling features of this bill are the provisions to advance energy conservation, efficiency,

and renewables. If fully funded and implemented, these would reduce demand and replace supplies from the other harmful energy sources over the long-term. These are the true investments in our future.

### Is this bill better than nothing?

Probably, but only marginally so. There are far more rapid, efficient, and effective ways to reduce oil dependence and greenhouse gas emissions. These include phased-in tax increases for fossil-based fuels of up to \$2 per gallon or carbon taxes based on the carbon content of various fossil fuels (with offsetting rebates or fully refundable tax credits for all low- and middle-income households); “feebates” where consumers who buy gas-guzzlers pay high fees that are used to rebate consumers who buy gas-sippers; and greenhouse gas emissions “cap and trade” programs with mandatory emissions caps where large utilities and manufacturers buy and sell a limited number of emission credits according to their own best interests.

These types of approaches let consumers and producers decide for themselves how best and how much to reduce their energy consumption or emissions. The resulting increased cost of fossil fuels and greenhouse gas emissions would make energy conservation, energy efficiency, renewable fuels, and renewable energy sources

much more competitive in the energy market. This new energy market would provide ample incentives for the development and use of more efficient and cleaner technologies.

### Is this the best Congress can do for now?

Probably. The Senate must be encouraged to stand firm in the conference committee with the House to support its conservation, efficiency, and renewables provisions. The Senate version is the absolute least the U.S. should be doing.

There is more work for us to do together. Congress can and must do better. The good news is that we don't have to repeat the bitter legacy of the last century. We have a choice. Ample, affordable, conserving, efficient, renewable, sustainable energy alternatives exist today that are just waiting for Congress to stop subsidizing the old industries at the expense of peace and security, the environment, and public health, and let the new, more efficient, cleaner technologies compete. These alternatives offer hope for a world free from the threat of war over oil, more jobs and a stronger economy, and an earth restored.

*Contact Congress and the administration at FCNL's website: <http://capwiz.com/fconl/dbq/officials/>*

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## Indigenous Peoples' Declaration at Water Forum

*The May/June 2005 issue of MaryknollNewsNotes opened with excerpts from the Indigenous Peoples' Declaration made during the Third World Water Forum in Kyoto, Japan. We promised to include additional sections in this issue. The entire text is available at <http://www.treatycouncil.org>.*

### **Right to water and self determination**

International law recognizes the rights of Indigenous Peoples to:

- Self-determination
- Ownership, control and management of our traditional territories, lands and natural
- Resources
- Exercise our customary law
- Represent ourselves through our own institutions
- Require free prior and informed consent to developments on our land
- Control and share in the benefits of the use of, our traditional knowledge...

Indigenous Peoples' interests on water and customary uses must be recognized by governments, ensuring that Indigenous rights are enshrined in national legislation and policy. Such rights cover both water quantity and quality and extend to water as part of a healthy environment and to its cultural and spiritual values. Indigenous interests and rights must be respected by international agreements on trade and investment, and all plans for new water uses and allocations....

### **Traditional knowledge**

Our traditional practices are dynamically regulated systems. They are based on natural and spiritual laws, ensuring sustainable use through traditional resource conservation....

### **Consultation**

To recover and retain our connection to our waters, we have the right to make decisions about waters at all levels. Governments, corporations and intergovernmental

tal organizations must, under international human rights standards require Indigenous Peoples free prior and informed consent and consultation by cultural appropriate means in all decision-making activities and all matters that may have affect...

**Plan of action**

We endorse and reiterate the “Kimberley Declaration and the Indigenous Peoples’ Plan of Implementation on Sustainable Development” which was agreed upon in Johannesburg during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002.

We resolve to sustain our ancestral and historical relationships with and assert our inherent and inalienable rights to our lands and waters. We resolve to maintain, strengthen and support Indigenous Peoples’ movements, struggles and campaigns on water and enhance the role of Indigenous elders, women and youth to protect water....

We challenge the dominant paradigm, policies, and programs on water development, which includes among others; government ownership of water, construction of large water infrastructures; corporatization; the privatization and commodification of water; the use of water as a tradeable commodity; and the liberalization of trade in water services, which do not recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples to water.

We strongly support the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams (WCD) on water and energy development. These include the WCD report’s core values, strategic priorities, the “rights and risks framework” and the use of multi-criteria assessment tools for strategic options assessment and project selection. ...

We demand a stop to mining, logging, energy and tourism projects that drain and pollute our waters and territories.

We demand that the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), regional banks like the Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, stop the imposition of

water privatization or ‘full cost recovery’ as a condition for new loans and renewal of loans of developing countries....

We will not support any policy or proposal coming from the WTO or regional trade agreements like the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement, Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) on water privatization and liberalization and we commit ourselves to fight against such agreements and proposals.

We resolve to replicate and transfer our traditional knowledge and practices on the sustainable use of water to our children and the future generations.

We encourage the broader society to support and learn from our water management practices for the sake of the conservation of water all over the world....

We insist that the human rights obligations of States must be complied with and respected by their international trade organizations. These legally binding human rights and environmental obligations do not stop at the door of the WTO and other regional and bilateral trade agreements....

We call on the States to respect the spirit of Article 8j of the Convention on Biological Diversity as it relates to the conservation of traditional knowledge on conservation of ecosystems and we demand that the Trade Related Aspects of the Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement be taken out of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreements as this violates our right to our traditional knowledge.

We call upon the States to fulfill the mandates of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. We call for the end of State financial subsidies to fossil fuel production and processing and for aggressive reduction of greenhouse gas emissions calling attention to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that reported an immediate 60 percent reduction of CO2 is needed to stabilize global warming.

We will ensure that international and domestic systems of restoration and compensation be put in place to restore the integrity of water and ecosystems.



*Photo of Bangladeshi woman courtesy of ITDG/Practical Action, www.itdg.org*



## Report from UN Conference on Status of Women

*Maryknoll Sister Mary Ann Smith has spent many years as a board member of ECPAT-USA (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Commercial Sexual Exploitation). She attended the recent session on the Conference of the Status of Women (CSW) and provided the following report.*

The 49th Session of the Conference on the Status of Women (CSW) was held at the United Nations Feb. 28 - March 11, 2005. During the first week, there were numerous presentations by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from around the world on the whole spectrum of women's concerns health, education, human rights, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, etc. Through these and other perspectives, there emerged a clear consensus that gender discrimination and poverty are the foundations on which the suffering and exploitation of women and children everywhere are built. While acknowledging that progress has been made since World Conferences from Mexico (1975) to Beijing (1995), which should be celebrated, women are still not adequately represented in governments and other decision-making bodies. Solidarity among women is essential if continuing injustices are to be overcome.

A stark example of the ways in which unjust laws, customs and religious taboos impact women was presented in a workshop on "Women and the Tsunami." According to the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), four times more women died in the December 2004 Asian tsunami than men. Unlike those men who were able to survive by swimming or climbing trees, many women were trapped by social and cultural taboos which forbid them to do such things. In many of the societies hit by the tsunami, women are not to be seen in public without clothes, so when the first waves ripped off their clothing, some women, paralyzed by fear and custom, stayed in their huts and died rather than run. Others who tried to run were impeded by their saris which prevented them from moving more quickly. In many cultures, women are the caregivers for the youngest and oldest members of the populace. Many women's bodies were found with children or elderly people.

None of the above male-imposed laws or customs hindered the men who ran quickly with or without clothes, climbed trees or whatever they could to escape the waves and only took care of themselves. Male survivors are facing these facts as they grieve the loss of their parents, sisters, wives and children. Relief workers hope this will be a teachable moment for all men,

especially male religious and political leaders. However that hope is tempered by the fact that some men have decided to fill the gap by trafficking women from other places to the affected areas in order to satisfy male needs.

The lack of the right to inherit and own land is another critical factor for women survivors. Even if their family had lands which survived the tsunami, the woman has little or no chance of regaining her land to live on since she is without the signature and legal presence of her deceased male. Landless women survivors have now joined the throngs of global, marginalized, vulnerable people moving around the world as refugees or victims of trafficking.

The NGO Caucus on Violence Against and Sexual Exploitation of Women submitted a statement to the government delegates to the Conference which urged the delegates to reaffirm and implement the Beijing Platform for Action in its entirety, as well as other documents ratified by member States in order to advance the protection and advancement of women's rights.

Some of the issues highlighted in this statement are: evaluation of the legal status of the prostitution of women, prosecution of procurers and customers, decriminalization of women and penalization of demand; adoption of immigration remedies for victims of sexual violence and exploitation, including asylum and lawful residence; creation of economic programs that provide potential victims with an alternative means of self support; raising awareness about the dangers of trafficking and prostitution; institution of educational programs targeting men and boys; and combating the early sexualization of girls through fashion and media. The trafficking track provided a wealth of information and experience about what works and what does not; who are our allies; what data is available and what is needed.

One of the session's highlights was a panel that included two Nobel Peace Prize winners, Wangari Maathi and Rigoberta Menchu. In her own strong manner, each spoke of the need for women of the globe to be in solidarity and to continue to work toward common goals for the good of all people and the environment. Mutual respect is critical and was demonstrated by these two great women for each other as well as for all present.

The enthusiasm and commitment of the thousands of women present at the Commission meetings is another sign of hope. Whatever the obstacles that might have been in their way, they all overcame them, came to this important meeting to be heard and to continue to expand supportive networks.

## Shareholder advocacy highlights

*The following is a sample of highlights of the 2004-2005 shareholder advocacy season. Socially responsible investors filed 268 proposals on social, environmental and corporate governance concerns at 184 corporations. This summary gives examples of the work around corporate accountability and water, global warming and the myriad of issues related to Wal-Mart.*

**Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux.** Boston Common Asset Management, a socially responsible investment firm that holds stock in the global water corporation Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux, gave a voice to groups from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, the Philippines and Uruguay at Suez's annual stockholders meeting in Paris on May 13. Representatives of groups such as FEJUVE (Bolivia) and the Center for Women's Resources (Philippines) expressed their concerns to Suez's management over corporate revenues gained at the expense of economically disadvantaged people. According to the Washington, D.C.-based organization Public Citizen:

"Suez earned a \$2.42 billion net profit in 2004; in Latin America alone, profits rose nearly 15 percent in the past year. Consumer groups say the corporation's revenue comes at the expense of economically disadvantaged people in countries where thousands lack access to potable water and water rates are skyrocketing, thanks to private water contracts. These contracts prioritize profit over the human right to water by raising water rates, cutting off the water of people unable to pay, refusing to extend services to poverty-stricken neighborhoods, and threatening legal action when contracts are terminated."

Boston Common felt it was important that Suez shareholders heard about these concerns directly from the people impacted by the privatization of water, and used its proxy to gain admission to the meeting for five people from grassroots movements. They read a statement in Spanish and French to stockholders and corporate management that concluded: "Water is a resource of all and not of a private business. The social movements reunited here reaffirm our commitment to continue the struggle to control our natural resources."

**ExxonMobil.** A shareholder proposal requesting ExxonMobil's board of directors "undertake a comprehensive review and publish within six months of the

annual meeting a report on how ExxonMobil will meet the greenhouse gas reduction targets of those countries in which it operates who which have adopted the Kyoto Protocol," received the highest-vote ever on a global warming resolution at the company. At the company's annual meeting on May 25, 28.3 percent of the 5.3 billion shares voted were cast in favor of the proposal.

**Wal-Mart.** At the company's annual meeting on June 3, at least 15 percent of Wal-Mart's shareholders voted in favor of a proposal calling on the company to prepare a Sustainability Report. Nearly 30 faith-based institutional investors sponsored the proposal.

In a letter written to other institutional investors seeking support of the proposal, the United Methodist Church General Board of Pensions and Health stated: "Sustainability is a business model that instructs companies to take into consideration the needs and interests of various stakeholders while concurrently sustaining their business, communities, and the environment for future generations. Sustainability also entails measuring and reporting corporate performance against economic, social and environmental criteria.

"Negative media coverage; class action lawsuits; fines by government agencies; and coordinated protests in both urban and rural communities indicate the persistent and growing problem with Wal-Mart's public image. We interpret Wal-Mart's recent full-page ads in newspapers to be a public relations campaign and not responsive to investor's request for a comprehensive, transparent, proactive report on how the company seeks to address, environmental, social and governance issues in ways other than the payment of fines."

Another shareholder proposal calling on the company to disclose its affirmative action policies received an 18 percent vote. A class-action sex-discrimination lawsuit is pending that could include as many as 1.6 million current and former female Wal-Mart employees.

These are significant votes at Wal-Mart, especially when one considers that the Walton family controls around 40 percent of the company's stock.



## Resources

- 1) **Many Stories, One Vision for a Nuclear-Free World:** In this 60th anniversary year of the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Pax Christi USA and the Nevada Desert Experience will host a shared gathering, **August 4-7**, at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas. Workshop leaders include Janet Chisholm; John Dear, SJ; and Bishop Steven Charleston, a Native American Episcopal bishop. Training will be provided in conjunction with the Saturday evening witness at the Nevada Test Site. For information, contact Pax Christi USA at 814-453-4955 or go to [www.paxchristiusa.org](http://www.paxchristiusa.org)
- 2) **Immersion mission experience in Kenya:** Friends Across Borders, a program of the Maryknoll Lay Mission Association, will lead a mission immersion trip to Kenya, **October 1-15. Deadline to apply is July 15.** Maryknoll missionaries in Nairobi and Mombassa will host the group, who will have the chance to visit the Masai Mara Game Park. Cost estimated at \$2,975 per person includes airfare (international and Nairobi-Mombassa) and safari costs. Also includes lodging, food, program and local transportation. To sign up for this trip or to learn more about upcoming mission immersion trips, contact Friends Across Borders, 414-461-1810; [maryknolltrips@yahoo.com](mailto:maryknolltrips@yahoo.com)
- 3) **Weaving Relationships: Canada-Guatemala Solidarity:** Published by Kathryn Anderson, this book is based on research with Guatemalans and Canadians, and offers Canadian case studies of solidarity, including the story of Project Accompaniment, which accompanied refugees into war zones in Guatemala. "Personal experiences, poetry and song lyrics, photographs and children's drawings are laced throughout the book, with the fibres of history and hope, conversation and conviction, solidarity and spirituality, fear and faith... We are challenged to keep the vigil. I would recommend this book for educating, consciousness-raising and deepening understanding of fellow citizens on the planet." -- Heather Robbins, Centre for Christian Studies study tour participant. For more information, see the Wilfrid Laurier University Press website, [www.wlupress.ca](http://www.wlupress.ca). To order the book in the U.S., contact Wilfrid Laurier University Press, <http://info.wlu.ca/~wwwpress/>; toll-free in North America: (866)836-5551.
- 4) **Genetic Engineering in Agriculture: The Myths, Environmental Risks, and Alternatives, second edition:** Written by agroecologist Dr. Miguel Altieri, this slim 100-page book outlines the concerns and dangers of genetically modified crops and the corporate powers that promote them. It provides guidance for a future of sustainable agriculture and social justice. Published by Food First. ISBN: 0-935028-93-5. \$11.95. Contact Food First to order, [www.foodfirst.org](http://www.foodfirst.org); 398 60th Street, Oakland CA, 94618.
- 5) **The Venezuelan Reader: The Building of a People's Democracy:** Edited by Olivia Burlingame Goumbri, published by the Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean (EPICA). "Born of a revulsion against the economic devastation wrought by the Washington Consensus of free-market uber alles, right-wing death squads and opportunity for the poor limited to growing coca leaf, a whole new way to govern, active and from the grassroots, has grasped the imagination of our hemisphere's dispossessed. Here, in the words of these new democratic revolutionaries themselves, is a portrait of government of the people, by the people and for the people. Love them, hate them - your choice - but read them. From the Venezuelan government's own explanation of their land reform program to the astute observations of Gregory Wilpert and Mark Weisbrot, this collection stands as a must-know response to the hysterical anti-Chávez propaganda poisoning U.S. news coverage of the new progressive wave in the Americas." --Greg Palast, author of *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy*. \$15.00. Purchase from [www.epica.org](http://www.epica.org) or call 202-332-0292 or email [epicabooks@epica.org](mailto:epicabooks@epica.org).
- 6) **Through a Glass Darkly: The U.S. Holocaust in Central America:** Thomas R. Melville has written this extensive and vivid account of the work of Maryknoll Father Ron Hennessey, who served in Guatemala for decades. The book parallels Fr. Hennessey's work in Guatemala with the U.S.'s policies toward that country at that time, policies which led to the suppression and death of thousands of Guatemalans. 650 pages. ISBN: 1-4134-6966-3 (softcover). For information, contact Xlibris Press at 888-795-4274 or go to [www.xlibris.com](http://www.xlibris.com).