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## Sabbath: Rest for all of creation

*Each issue of NewsNotes in 2007 will begin with a reflection on the Sabbath. This is the sabbatical year, the seventh year after the great Jubilee at the turn of the millennium and a fitting time to renew our commitment to righting the relationships in our lives. We are called to establish a regular, repeated pattern of personal and social transformation that rearranges everything toward harmony and balance, including with the rest of creation. Returning this year to that tradition, we explore its significance and its challenge to the reality of the world in which we now live.*

An especially important aspect of Sabbath for us to remember is that Sabbath is not designed only for yourself to rest, but, perhaps more importantly, “that your ox and your ass may also have rest, and that the son of your maidservant and the alien may be refreshed.” (Exodus 23:12b). In many ways, the most overlooked beast of burden, in desperate need of a rest, is the Earth itself, which we have abused with increasing proficiency as time passes. Perhaps the Sabbath call can help us to bring about more serious reductions in our drain on the Earth.

It is important to look at the impact that humans have made on the Earth in terms of the Earth’s experience. For example, if we are to agree that God designed evolution to form humans, we can use fossil records to estimate the Earth’s age to be around 4.5 million years old. By condensing those millions of years into one year, we can see easily how dramatic our presence has been on Earth.

In this “Earthen year,” the Earth was “born” on January 1. It is not until March that life begins to form. Cells with nuclei don’t come into existence until July. Dinosaurs appear around December 10, while the first homo sapiens don’t walk the Earth until Saturday night at 11:36 p.m. By these calculations, Jesus would appear at 11:59:46 - 14 seconds before midnight. The Industrial Revolution doesn’t start until three seconds before midnight.

Think about that. Basically everything we see in the world today in terms of roads, buildings, cars, mines, etc. have only been built in the last few seconds in the Earth’s year of life. With the Industrial Revolution, humans began to harness energy from fossil fuels – energy that had been stored and compressed for millions of years. This energy allowed us to multiply our effect on everything. Instead of shovels, now huge machines can dig huge scars into the Earth. Tops of

glorious mountains have been torn down to clog up rivers in the search for a few pounds of gold; factories pour out thick, black smoke 24 hours a day; and not just rivers and ponds, but even our enormous oceans have been over-fished. Catastrophic changes in the mere blink of an eye in Earthen terms.

The concept of Sabbath can help us to bring about more serious reductions in our spending of resources and creation of waste. Though it is easy to forget, our everyday actions are what drive so much of this destruction. Every time we use energy, drive a car, use a battery, listen to an iPod, etc. we are contributing to the stripping of the Earth of its richness.

Imagine if there were an agreed upon “global Sabbath” every seven days, where all sources of energy, motors, etc. would be turned off for 24 hours. It’s hard to imagine the silence that would provoke – no cars rushing by, nor planes overhead, no humming motors or light bulbs, no blaring TVs, radios or computers. Think what it could do for our interpersonal relationships when we could truly listen to one another without any distractions. While such a global Sabbath is something to work toward, in the meantime, each of us can explore the possibility of personal and family Sabbaths. It will be your part of letting the Earth rest.

*For additional reading, consider finding a copy of “The Earth Bible,” developed by a team of scholars from Australia. In this significant series, writers from around the world read the Bible from the perspective of justice for Earth. Ecojustice principles are used as guidelines as they ask questions of the text: Does a given text value or de-value Earth? Is the voice of Earth heard or suppressed? Are humans portrayed as ‘rulers’ over Earth or kin with Earth? Does Earth suffer unjustly?*

*The basic aims of the Earth Bible Project are to: 1) develop ecojustice principles appropriate to an earth hermeneutic for interpreting the Bible and for promoting justice and healing of Earth; 2) publish these interpretations as contributions to the current debate on ecology, ecoethics and ecotheology; and 3) provide a responsible forum within which the suppressed voice of Earth may be heard and impulses for healing Earth may be generated.*

*Contact Pilgrim Press for more information about the Earth Bible series, [www.thepilgrimpress.org](http://www.thepilgrimpress.org), (800)537-3394; email [orders@thepilgrimpress.com](mailto:orders@thepilgrimpress.com).*

## Africa: Significant challenges of urban poverty

*In 2007, the number of slum-dwellers worldwide is expected to reach one billion persons; that number could double in the next 13 years. Also in 2007, for the first time, the number of people living in cities will exceed the number living in rural areas. UN Habitat has found that slums in sub-Saharan Africa show the highest levels of deprivation. About 80 percent of the region's slum households have one or two "shelter deprivations" while almost half of all households suffer from at least two deprivations. "Shelter deprivations" are lack of water, lack of sanitation, overcrowding, non-durable housing structures and a lack of security of tenure. The following article is based on an InterPress Service News Agency article (4/19/07), an IRIN report (4/16/07) and UN Habitat statements. See also the September-October 2006 issue of NewsNotes.*

While countries in North Africa have seen a declining trend in the number and proportion of slum dwellers, countries in sub-Saharan Africa have experienced average annual growth rates of 4.53 percent in urban slum populations. This trend is partly attributed to the declining economies of some countries in the region, the high prevalence of HIV and conflict.

At the opening of the 21st Session of UN Habitat's Governing Council in Nairobi, the new United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for a more concerted international effort to improve the lives of these urban slum-dwellers.

The challenges they face on a daily basis are tremendous: a lack of sanitation, safe drinking water and health services; high maternal and child mortality rates; and social insecurity.

Kenya, where the meeting took place, has one of the biggest slums in Africa – Kibera – with over 750,000 inhabitants in need of basic services and decent housing. According to UN Habitat, 60 percent of Nairobi residents live in slums, occupying five percent of the residential land. The meeting on the theme: "Sustainable Urbanization: Local Action for Urban Poverty Reduction," focused on finance and planning. (IRIN)

According to Anna Tibaijuka, executive director

for UN Habitat, many governments in developing countries are facing cash shortages and are unable to provide better housing, sanitation and health for low-income households. "It is time," she said, "to include the private sector more in addressing the plight of slum-dwellers. A government cannot work alone and hope to provide workable solutions and housing for the poor."

Tibaijuka said there is a perception globally that slum dwellers do not have money. Yet, even if they are poor, they spend substantial sums on basic necessities. Slum dwellers pay four to 100 times more for water than affluent people. For example, in Kenya, water is sometimes obtained from portable sources such as water trucks.

People living in slums also spend large amounts of money on housing. Often, especially in Africa, these dwellings are erected on public land which was grabbed by slum landlords who then built makeshift accommodation. A study by UN Habitat showed that the costs of building shacks are on average recovered within nine months. Whatever the tenant pays thereafter is pure profit for the "owner" who has no title deeds and therefore no legal claim to the land and no right to rent out

the shacks. Tibaijuka said that many are "owned" by rich people living in plush estates and that it is unacceptable that they rent out dwellings without supplying water and sanitation facilities.

Micro-finance institutions willing to lend money for low-income shelter development and community-based financing of housing, for both settlement upgrading and building new houses, could help low-income households.

"Other non-financial challenges include land legislation that makes it difficult to use real estate as effective collateral, as well as inappropriate national and regulatory frameworks governing land use, occupancy and ownership," she added.

According to Tibaijuka, UN Habitat's Governing Council is looking at mechanisms to raise funds to put up affordable housing for slum-dwellers. "We are looking into helping these people raise housing finance through the creation of housing cooperatives and business entities," she said.



Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki said local authorities had a key role to play in creating an environment for sustainable urbanization: "Many cities in the developing countries face problems of securing and distributing sufficient supplies of clean water to the residents, constraints in solid waste disposal, and proper sanitation. These shortfalls are attributed to weak and poorly financed local governments." He called for public, private and community partnerships to address the challenges of urbanization.

The Governing Council passed two landmark resolutions during the meeting. One gives the agency the go-ahead to set up experimental financial mechanisms for *pro-poor housing and infrastructure*; the

other approved a new *Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan*.

In her closing remarks to the conference, Tibaijuka recalled the words of a slum dweller, who said, "Please open your doors, and stop calling us 'beneficiaries.' We are your PARTNERS!" She concluded, "Indeed this Council took heed of this and many other calls. While you have placed the highest priority on the interests of the urban poor, you have done so without forgetting that we face a common challenge and looming threat of the environmental consequences of rapid urban growth. Your decisions this week establish a new road map for our quest, indeed our mission, for sustainable urbanization." (UN Habitat).

## Africa: Global movement for food sovereignty

*The following statement was published by participants in the Food Sovereignty Forum, held in Mali from February 23-27. Organizers of the forum include Via Campesina, the international peasant movement; ROPPA, the network of farmers of West Africa; the World March of Women; the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers (WFF); the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP); the International NGO/CSO Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty; NGO members of the Food Sovereignty Network; Friends of the Earth International; workers' trade unions and consumer defense movements.*

We, more than 500 representatives from more than 80 countries, of organizations of peasants/family farmers, artisanal fisher-folk, indigenous peoples, landless peoples, rural workers, migrants, pastoralists, forest communities, women, youth, consumers, environmental and urban movements have gathered together in the village of Nyéléni in Sélingué, Mali to strengthen a global movement for food sovereignty. We are doing this, brick by brick, have been living in huts constructed by hand in the local tradition, and eating food that is being produced and prepared by the Sélingué community. We give our collective endeavor the name "Nyéléni" as a tribute to and inspiration from a legendary Malian peasant woman who farmed and fed her peoples well.

Most of us are food producers and are ready, able and willing to feed all the world's peoples. Our heritage as food producers is critical to the future of humanity. This is specially so in the case of women

and indigenous peoples who are historical creators of knowledge about food and agriculture and are devalued. But this heritage and our capacities to produce healthy, good and abundant food are being threatened and undermined by neo-liberalism and global capitalism. Food sovereignty gives us the hope and power to preserve, recover and build on our food producing knowledge and capacity.

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers. Food sovereignty prioritizes local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal-fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability.

Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just income to all peoples and the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage our lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social



relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations.

In Nyéléni, through numerous debates and interactions, we are deepening our collective understanding of food sovereignty and learned about the reality of the struggles of our respective movements to retain autonomy and regain our powers. We now understand better the tools we need to build our movement and advance our collective vision.

What are we fighting for?

A world where:

- all peoples, nations and states are able to determine their own food producing systems and policies that provide every one of us with good quality, adequate, affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food;
- there is recognition and respect of women's roles and rights in food production, and representation of women in all decision making bodies;
- all peoples in each of our countries are able to live with dignity, earn a living wage for their labor and have the opportunity to remain in their homes;
- food sovereignty is considered a basic human right, recognized and implemented by communities, peoples, states and international bodies;
- we are able to conserve and rehabilitate rural environments, fish stocks, landscapes and food traditions based on ecologically sustainable management of land, soils, water, seas, seeds, livestock and other biodiversity;
- we value, recognize and respect our diversity

of traditional knowledge, food, language and culture, and the way we organize and express ourselves;

- there is genuine and integral agrarian reform that guarantees peasants full rights to land, defends and recovers the territories of indigenous peoples, ensures fishing communities' access and control over their fishing areas and eco-systems, honors access and control over pastoral lands and migratory routes, assures decent jobs with fair remuneration and labor rights for all, and a future for young people in the countryside;

- agrarian reform revitalizes interdependence between producers and consumers, ensures community survival, social and economic justice

and ecological sustainability, and respect for local autonomy and governance with equal rights for women and men ... where it guarantees the right to territory and self-determination for our peoples;

- we share our lands and territories peacefully and fairly among our peoples, be we peasants, indigenous peoples, artisanal fishers, pastoralists, or others;

- in the case of natural and human-created disasters and conflict-recovery situations, food sovereignty acts as a kind of "insurance" that strengthens local recovery efforts and mitigates negative impacts.

- we remember that affected communities are not helpless, and where strong local organization for self-help is the key to recovery;

- peoples' power to make decisions about their material, natural and spiritual heritage are defended;

- all peoples have the right to defend their territories from the actions of transnational corporations.

... Just as we are working with the local community in Sélingué to create a meeting space at Nyéléni, we are committed to building our collective movement for food sovereignty by forging alliances, supporting each others' struggles and extending our solidarity, strengths, and creativity to peoples all over the world who are committed to food sovereignty. Every struggle, in any part of the world for food sovereignty, is our struggle ... .

*For a copy of the full statement see [www.maryknollogc.org](http://www.maryknollogc.org).*



## African Water Network

*“Water is the common heritage of all creation as it is an essential dimension of the journey of life. No single species nor any region of Earth, no economic class nor political party, can claim it as its own. Its cycles and seasons have nurtured civilizations from the beginning. Its deep mysteries have inspired spiritual practices in all the great religious traditions. In the presence of water, all creatures and all creation stand in need, side-by-side, dependent and grateful.”*  
(Maryknoll Statement on Water)

Despite the disastrous record of water privatizations in Africa, international aid donors and governments continue to promote “private sector participation” and commercialization as the solution to Africa’s water crisis. In early 2007, civil society groups and social movements announced the launch of a new African Water Network to counter this misguided push for water privatization. Over 250 activists, representing organizations and social movements from over 40 African countries, committed to actively supporting this network during an historic session at the World Social Forum in Nairobi.

In a strong statement, the network outlined five non-negotiable principles which this network will promote:

1. To fight against water privatization in all its forms
2. To ensure participatory public control and management of water resources
3. Oppose all forms of prepaid water meters
4. Ensure that water is enshrined in our national constitutions as a human right
5. Ensure that the provision of water is a national project solely in the public domain

The need for adequate drinking water and sanitation is great. Eighty percent of sickness in the global South, and the deaths of 4,500 children daily, trace back to contaminated water and inadequate sanitation. Clean water is key to every other aspect of development — from children’s education to economic growth and environmental sustainability. But 1.1 billion people still lack access to even the minimum amount of safe water that is necessary for basic health, and 2.4 billion people are without basic sanitation.

While the U.S. government has long funded water and sanitation efforts abroad, most of this aid was for emergency and temporary water supplies or

for projects concentrated in a few countries. With its *Water for the Poor Act*, signed into law on December 1, 2005, Congress focused concern on long-term, sustainable water and sanitation provision in countries of greatest need. The Act emphasizes affordable and equitable access for impoverished communities. For this reason, we are asking Congress to appropriate \$500 million specifically for the Development Assistance Account.

Congress’ continued leadership role is critical. In calendar year 2007 there is an unmatched opportunity for the U.S. to exert moral, diplomatic and financial leadership so as to reach the goal, as stated in the *Water for the Poor Act*, of halving by 2015 “the proportion of people unable to reach or afford safe drinking water and basic sanitation.”

### **Faith in action:**

Contact your senators and representative, using the sample letter below as a guide, and urge Congress to include in Development Assistance Account funding for Fiscal Year 2008 an amount of \$500 million for clean drinking water and adequate sanitation internationally. This increase should be part of an overall increase in U.S. development assistance for poverty alleviation worldwide.

Dear Senator/Congressman:

I am writing to you today to ask that Congress increase U.S. Development Assistance Account funding to \$500 million for Fiscal Year 2008 for clean drinking water and adequate sanitation internationally. These increases should be part of an overall increase in U.S. development assistance for poverty alleviation world-wide. Millions of people every year die from diseases that are easily preventable, because they lack sufficient safe water. Lack of safe, clean drinking water kills 4,500 children every day.

[Integrate the final two paragraphs of the article above in your letter.]

*For more information about the African Water Network contact Al-hassan Adam, Ghana Coalition against Privatisation of Water, [alhassan.adam@gmail.com](mailto:alhassan.adam@gmail.com); and Anil Naidoo, Blue Planet Project, [anil@canadians.org](mailto:anil@canadians.org).*



## Uganda: Peace talks resume

*The ceasefire between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the government of Uganda has been extended until the end of June, and as NewsNotes goes to press, peace talks are set to resume in Juba.*

From March 31 to April 6 a meeting took place in Mombasa between the delegation of the Ugandan government, led by Gen. Salim Saleh, and the delegation of the Lord's Resistance Army, led by Martin Ojul. The meeting was organized and conducted under the auspices of IKV Pax Christi Netherlands and the mediation of Prof. Hizkias Assefa and facilitation of Dr. Simon Simonse. Since 1998 Pax Christi has been involved in the search for a negotiated settlement of the conflict in northern Uganda. In 2006 it facilitated initial contacts between the LRA and the Ugandan government and through Prof. Assefa has co-chaired the Juba peace talks since their beginning.

In this meeting, the parties were able to freely discuss unresolved issues in the stalled negotiations in Juba.

On April 11, Pax Christi Netherlands issued a statement saying that significant agreements between the delegates were reached to extend the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA), address blockages in its implementation and resolve other outstanding issues of contention. They said that the parties agreed that the only major issues left for the negotiations would be demobilization, disarmament and reintegration, as well as a formal ceasefire.

According to the Pax Christi Netherlands statement, "A major obstacle in the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, signed in Juba on 26 August 2006, and a real danger to the peace process, has been the East Bank Assembly Point for the LRA combatants. LRA combatants hesitated and later refused to assemble at Owiny-ki-Bul. The location, according to LRA was unsafe because of the presence of UPDF in the vicinity and because of land mines. LRA combatants on the East Bank have repeatedly been accused of attacks on civilians that had in fact been carried out by members of Sudanese armed groups still active on the East Bank. The agreement negotiated by General Saleh takes away a stumbling block for progress in the negotiations by allowing LRA fighters that were supposed to assemble in Owiny-ki-Bul to move to the camp in Ri-Kwangba and join the rest of the LRA forces that are supposed to assemble there. This agreement meets the express

request of the LRA leadership.

"As far as the sticking points in Agenda item no 2 ('Comprehensive Solutions') are concerned, agreement was reached on a number of policies that address the marginalization of northern and northeastern Uganda. These include measures to reinforce constitutional provisions ensuring equal opportunity and affirmative action for northern and eastern Ugandans; mechanisms, complementary to the Peace Recovery and Development Program that counteract siphoning of availed funds to governmental and non-governmental coordination structures and empower the war-affected citizens to play an active role in their own rehabilitation and development.

"The meeting addressed the issues of accountability and reconciliation ... The two parties agreed that traditional institutions such as *Mato Oput*, *Culo Kwor*, *Kayo Cuk*, etc. should play a prominent role in the reconciliation of war-affected individuals and communities. In addition to these traditional mechanisms and underscoring the unacceptability of impunity for crimes against humanity, alternative justice systems will be put in place that will address accountability and enable victims to seek justice for grievances. To address grievances and historical conflicts at the national level the parties committed themselves to establish special forums. The Government of Uganda has agreed to ask Parliament to enact legislation that recognizes traditional and alternative justice mechanisms as key elements in dealing with accountability for the offences committed during the war. Once the justice systems are effectively in place the Government of Uganda will approach the International Criminal Court regarding the indictments against the four leaders of the LRA ..."

Subsequent meetings were held in mid-April between LRA leader Joseph Kony, Uganda's interior minister Ruhakana Rugunda, Southern Sudan's Vice President Riek Machar and former Mozambican president Joaquim Chissano.

According to the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) (4/16/07), the renewed truce between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) boosted hopes that the conflict in northern Uganda would finally be brought to an end.

The talks in Juba stalled in December after the rebels announced that they were walking out because they feared for their lives. They demanded a new



venue and new mediators, accusing the current mediators of the southern Sudanese government - of bias.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has indicted the LRA leader Joseph Kony, his deputy Vincent

Otti and three other commanders for crimes against humanity - specifically for murder, rape, mutilations and mass abductions.

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## Kenya: Catholic debt campaign takes action

*In late February, Kenya's Catholic Economic Justice (CEJ) Network delivered 85,000 postcards to Kenya National Human Rights Commission chairman Maina Kiai. Signed by Kenyans, the postcards demand that their government push for cancellation of its foreign debts. If debt cancellation is not forthcoming, they called for Kenya to repudiate its debts.*

CEJ put particular emphasis on gaining full access to the national debt register — a listing of loans contracted by the government and a description of the ways the loans were used. CEJ reports a recent major success in getting access to part of the register, covering the period up to 2002. Until this development, the register, although technically a public document, had been kept secret.

The intention is to determine what debts are illegitimate. It is expected that 80 percent of Kenya's debts will qualify as illegitimate. The campaign mounted by CEJ, "Debt is Slavery! Debt is Poverty! Refusing to pay is Justice!", has worked to educate Kenyans and popularize demands for repudiation of illegitimate debt. Pressure will now be mounted on the government to institute accessible monitoring mechanisms for future loans and on elected representatives to push for repudiation.

According to a report in *The Nation* (2/27/07), debt campaigners "also want the support of the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission to investigate and prosecute people indicated in the debt register as beneficiaries of money loaned to the country." They want those who siphoned public money to return it, apologize to the public and be punished. They want an annual, comprehensive financial report on public income and expenditures and a monitoring mechanism to ensure that future loans are approved by Kenyans and used in a transparent manner.

Thus far Kenya has not been included in the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Initiative or other debt cancellation strategies of multilateral or bilateral creditors because its nearly US\$7 billion external debt is deemed "sustainable" under HIPC

debt sustainability criteria that compare external debt to exports. However, Kenya also suffers from a large internal debt stock which is not taken into consideration when determining debt sustainability.

Most of Kenya's debt was accrued by the regime of Daniel arap Moi with more than \$2 billion in loans from the IMF and World Bank during his 24-year rule. This support propped up the Moi regime and made it difficult for civil society actors to challenge corruption and repression in their country. Thus civil society groups have deemed much of Kenya's debt to be odious.

The CEJ Network is an interest and lobby group of Catholic institutions and affiliated organizations hosted at the AMECEA offices. Its members include the Kenya Episcopal Conference-Catholic Secretariat (through the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission and the Research and Advocacy Department), the Justice & Peace Desk of AMECEA, congregations such as the Jesuits, Comboni Missionaries/Sisters, Consolata Sisters, MSOLA, Sisters of Mercy, Association of Sisterhood of Kenya – Justice and Peace Commission, Tangaza College, Somireneec, the Catholic Information Service for Africa and Chemchemi ya Ukweli. CEJ collaborates with the Kenya Debt Relief Network, the Hindu Council of Kenya, the National Council of Churches of Kenya and the Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims.

CEJ studies the impact of international policies and treaties that affect the people in the Catholic Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA) region (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Malawi and Zambia, Djibouti and Somalia). CEJ attempts to engage in an effective dialogue with those who are better positioned to transform the rules that govern economic behavior. CEJ focuses on issues of international trade and economic globalization. Following the pastoral letter of the Catholic bishops of Kenya on the burden of international debt, CEJ particularly advocates for debt cancellation or repudiation for Kenya.

## Darfur: A process too slow

*In early May, the U.S. will have a special window of opportunity, as it takes the presidency of the UN Security Council, to engage the international community in action against the genocide taking place in Darfur where millions of lives have been lost, and like numbers displaced over the years.*

Eight months ago, UN Resolution 1706 passed in the Security Council, authorizing the deployment of over 20,000 UN peacekeepers to Darfur with a mandate to protect and defend the countless suffering men, women and children in that area, yet attacks continue with impunity because the international community has allowed the government of Sudan to veto its responsibility to protect its citizens.

According to an April 20 report from the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), Sudan's long-awaited agreement to the UN-African Union (AU) "Heavy Support package" for Darfur has been cautiously greeted by the international community, but both the UN and AU admit that the task of setting up the operation has just begun.

The Heavy Support package, as its name indicates, is not the robust force Darfur needs," said UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Marie Guehenno after a meeting with AU Chairman Alpha Oumar Konare this week. "It is a support package to lay the ground for a future robust force."

The current AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) force of 7,000 deployed in the region is understaffed and underfunded, creating a crucial need for improved security for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps and aid workers. AMIS has also come under attack from unknown gunmen and lost seven men in April. It now plans to establish two battalions to protect its men and the upcoming support package.

The package is the second part of a three-step

operation consisting of a Light Support package, a Heavy Support package, and an AU-UN Hybrid force; and primarily aims to aid AMIS.

The agreement with the Sudanese government allows the UN to continue planning for the U.S. \$289.9 million Heavy Support package in order to ensure its deployment in the months ahead.

The package will include a signals unit, communications unit, and logistics staff who will be deployed as part of the 2,250 military personnel. No infantry will be deployed, but the personnel include helicopter pilots, and military tactical staff, among others.

Currently, the UN is holding meetings with troop-contributing countries, mostly in Africa, to determine who would be willing to send personnel to Darfur.

A contingent of 301 police officers will be deployed, along with 1,136 civilian personnel to work on human rights issues, humanitarian affairs and civilian logistics, among other proposals. But only 150 civilian workers will be international staff.

The \$21 million Light Support package has almost been completed, with a logistics, personnel, equipment, and humanitarian aid component. Eighty percent of all personnel have been recruited or identified - 105 military specialists and 30 police, according to a senior UN official.

In order to place two more AMIS security battalions on the ground, funding must be forthcoming, according to the AU's Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Said Djinnit, especially because six security battalions were approved in September last year, but none have been placed due to lack of funds.

The announcement by the Sudanese comes after months of disagreement over proposals to boost inter-



*A girl at a camp for Darfur refugees*

national peacekeeping efforts in Darfur.

Recently, in a speech at the Holocaust Museum, President Bush had said he would give Bashir “a short period of time” to agree to a full deployment of UN peacekeeping forces; to end his support for the *janjaweed*, the militias that have been carrying out systematic killings of civilians in Darfur; and to allow aid to reach the region.

If Bashir does not comply, Bush said that he would direct the Treasury Department to block any dollar transactions between the Sudanese government and the United States, and to bar 29 Sudanese companies from doing business here. He said he would also impose sanctions against individuals responsible for the violence and direct Condoleezza Rice to seek new United Nations sanctions.

Some advocates for peace in Darfur, who have long criticized the administration for inaction, ex-

pressed severe disappointment that he did not take stronger action. Others said that his words signaled a new level of intensity.

In March, Bush administration officials said that they were fed up with Sudan’s refusal to permit the deployment of United Nations peacekeepers in the country and that the president was ready to impose the kind of sanctions he outlined.

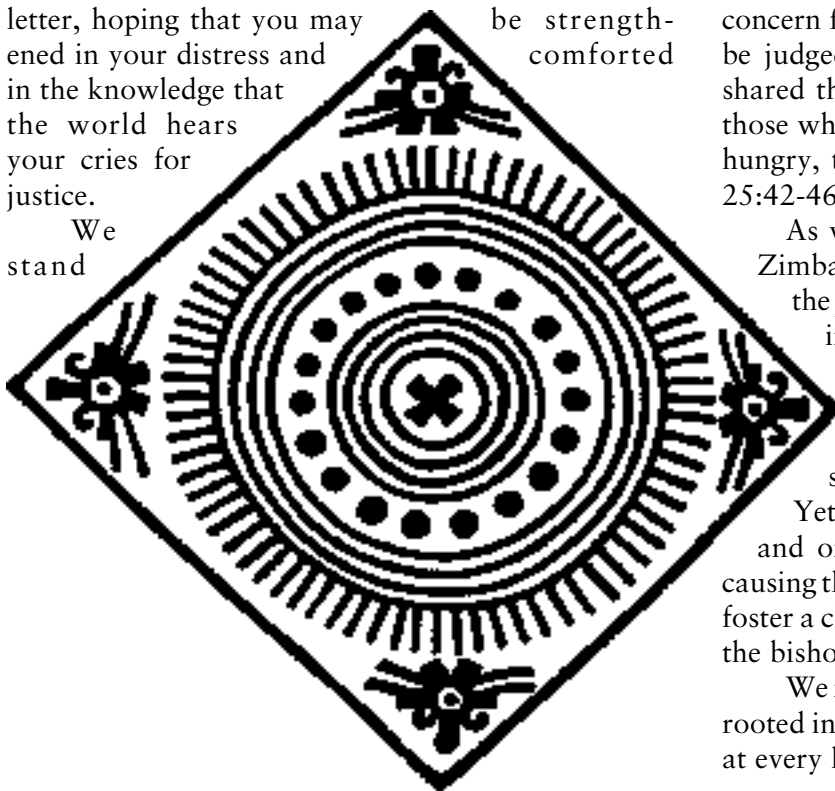
However, in mid-April, Sudan announced that it had dropped its objections to letting a 3,000-member United Nations force of military police officers and six attack helicopters into Darfur. The move, the second stage of a process aimed at getting a total force of 21,000 peacekeepers into the region, came just as a confidential UN study found that Sudan was flying arms and heavy equipment into Darfur in planes painted white, apparently to masquerade as UN jets.

## Zimbabwe: Expressions of solidarity

*The following letter was signed by over 1,100 people of faith from around the world.*

Greetings of solidarity and peace to our sisters and brothers of Zimbabwe! As people of faith from many countries and continents we send you this letter, hoping that you may be strengthened in your distress and comforted in the knowledge that the world hears your cries for justice.

We stand



with you in solidarity as members of the one body of Christ. Through this unbreakable bond we share in your sufferings, for where one person suffers, each person suffers and the whole body is weakened (1 Corinthians 12:12-30).

The entire ministry of Jesus was marked by concern for the vulnerable. Jesus tells us that we will be judged at the end of time on whether we have shared this concern, and he has sobering words for those who neglected to help him when they saw him hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, or homeless (Matthew 25:42-46).

As violence and unrest continue to intensify in Zimbabwe, our concern for you and especially for the poor, the neglected, and the persecuted people in your country is also deepening.

We have heard the powerful words of Zimbabwe’s Catholic Bishops: “Our country is in deep crisis. A crisis is an unstable situation of extreme danger and difficulty. Yet, it can also be turned into a moment of grace and of a new beginning if those responsible for causing the crisis repent, heed the cry of the people and foster a change of heart and mind ....” We will follow the bishops’ call to prayer and fasting.

We fervently hope that you will soon know peace rooted in the rule of law and respect for human rights at every level in your communities and your nation.

## China: "One-child" policy risks social harmony

*China says it will maintain its "one-child" policy for another five years despite the pressure of an aging population and a shrinking work force. The government says the policy has helped to control population growth while boosting the economy. But with a cultural preference for males, the policy could also put the country at risk of social instability as marriageable males far outnumber women in China.*

At least 118 boys were born for every 100 girls in 2005, with as many as 130 boys to 100 girls in some regions, according to Zhang Weiqing, minister of the National Population and Family Planning Commission. The average for industrialized countries is between 104 and 107 boys for every 100 girls.

Beijing says its one-child policy, which dates from the late 1970s, has helped prevent 400 million births, putting less demand on China's natural resources and speeding the country's economic development.

However, with the easy availability of ultrasound, many women choose to abort baby girls in keeping with China's traditional preference for boys. Researchers project that in 20 years more than 10 percent of marriageable Chinese men – or some 25 million – could find it difficult to find a bride.

China's population is expected to peak at 1.45 billion in about 20 years. Zeng Yi of Peking University's China Centre for Economic Research estimates that, if the one-child policy remains in place, the population will drop 100 million every decade between 2030 and 2080. After 2025, he says, people 65 or over would account for at least 20 percent of the population – more than double the proportion now.

As a result, Zeng predicts serious labor shortages, huge burdens on the education and health care sectors, and inadequate funds for pensions and social insurance. "If we maintain the present family planning policy, China will see its labor source shrink quickly and lose its comparative advantage for economic development," he concludes.

The one-child policy has already led to pressing labor shortages in large Chinese industries, especially in the industrialized south. Willie Fung Wai-yiu, chairman of Top Form International, a beer factory, says,

"Two years ago, for each job in our Jianxi factory there were five to 10 applicants. Today we don't have more than two candidates for each place." The problem is prevalent across the country. In Shaoxing, in Zhejiang, there is a lack of labor for manufacturing firms and at least 100,000 workers are needed.

The one-child policy could also impose an enormous economic burden on young people. In what has come to be known as the "4:2:1 problem," many an only-child will have to care for two parents and four grandparents.

Nevertheless, Wang Guoqiang, vice minister of the National Population and Family Planning Commission, says the one-child policy will stay in place for the next five years. "We believe the situation is different in different parts of the country," he says. "Farmers still want to have children because they don't enjoy any social security."

Actually, China's one-child policy applies to only 35 percent of the population, Wang says. Fifty-three percent of all couples are allowed to have a second child if their first is a girl. Poor farmers

who are allowed to have two children account for nearly 10 percent, and ethnic minorities allowed two or more children make up 1.6 percent.

Even in rural areas, however, there are increasing reports of human rights violations. These include forced abortions or sterilizations by government officials, abandonment or infanticide of baby girls, and kidnapping of children. There is also a growing trade in kidnapped women as Chinese gangs traffic Vietnamese and North Korean women for would-be Chinese husbands.

Meanwhile, the country's third-ranking leader says democracy in China is still a long way off. Democracy will emerge once a mature socialist system develops, but that might not happen for 100 years, Premier Wen Jiabao writes in the People's Daily, the main Communist Party newspaper. For now, he says, China must focus on "sustained rapid growth of productive forces ... to finally secure fairness and social justice that lies within the essence of socialism." But are tens of millions of young men more likely to sacrifice their hope of raising a family for 100 years for the sake of a political system, or to work to change the system?



## Thailand: Standoff over AIDS medication

*In early February, the Thai government, acting within World Trade Organization (WTO) regulations, announced that it would issue a compulsory license on patents for non-commercial use of the AIDS drug Kaletra. This would allow the use of cheaper generic versions and increased access to that drug for more people living with AIDS. Complex responses followed, as other governments, the World Health Organization (WHO), and Abbott reacted to Thailand's decision.*

Thailand has 580,000 people living with HIV/AIDS, and has long been respected for taking the lead in reducing the rate of infection of HIV, legislating a mandate to achieve access to essential medicines, and committing to universal access to anti-retroviral treatments for all persons who would need them.

Kaletra, a combination of Lopinavir and Ritonovir, is an essential drug for people who have developed drug resistance or have adverse effects from other first-line AIDS medicines. In addition, the most recent formulation does not have to be refrigerated or taken with food, which makes it more accessible for people living in rural areas.

Recognizing that Kaletra was too expensive for most people living with AIDS, Thai Health Minister Mongkol Na Songkhla signed the compulsory license into law, in order to import generic forms of the medicine from India at lower prices. (The generic version currently costs US\$124 per month, but could be produced for \$62 per month.)

Abbott Labs, which holds the patents on Kaletra (also sold as Aluvia), responded to Thailand's action by withdrawing Kaletra, as well as applications for new medicines for pain, antibiotics, blood clots, arthritis, high blood pressure and kidney disease. Abbott CEO Miles White commented that Abbott's decision reflected "concerns that compulsory licensing would be abused ever-more widely, using HIV as an excuse."

Abbott drew worldwide criticism from AIDS activists, the Thai Network of People living with AIDS (TNP+), faith-based institutional investors, and health organizations, including Doctors Without Borders (MSF), which has been at the forefront of the fight for access to essential medicines. "Our patients in Thailand, who still use the old version of the medicine, have been waiting for this new version for a very long time," said Dr. David Wilson, of MSF. "Refusing to sell the drug here is a major betrayal to patients."

Maryknoll missionary Br. John Beeching writes from Thailand, "There is no question that the Thai government has made an honest effort, within their financial powers, to respond to Abbott for remuneration, and it wasn't accepted by the company."

In the United States, Kaletra costs more than \$7,500 per year; Abbott provides it for \$500 per patient in 69 of the world's poorest countries, including all of Africa. In low- and middle income countries, Abbott offers the medicine at \$2,200 per year, but in Thailand, fewer than 10 percent of those who need this drug can afford it. Over the past three years, both the WHO and the World Bank predicted rising drug costs in Thailand because second-line drugs can cost five times more than first line medicines.

Abbott maintains that the matter is about intellectual property and the integrity of the patent system. In fact, Thailand was well within TRIPS (Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) regulations, which allow governments to declare health emergencies and issue compulsory licenses to import generic versions of necessary medicines. "We agree that the TRIPS agreement does not and should not prevent members from taking measures to protect public health ... [W]e affirm that the agreement can and should be interpreted and implemented in a manner supportive of WTO members." (Doha Declaration, 2001) Compulsory licenses are time limited and the patent holder receives a royalty. The Thai government had said that it will pay 0.5 percent royalties on the patented medicines.

On April 10, Abbott announced a reduced price of US\$1,000 for low- and middle- income countries like Thailand for the older version of Kaletra, only if Thailand renounced the use of compulsory licenses. Critics pointed out that Abbott's offer did not include the new version of Kaletra which does not require refrigeration. After several days, Thailand announced that it would maintain the compulsory license for Kaletra (as well as Merck's Efavirenz), despite the reduction in price. In addition, Siriwat Thiptaradol, of Thailand's Food and Drug Administration, announced that pharmaceutical companies will be required to declare the production cost of new medicines, and that health officials will "monitor the marketing and promotional tactic of pharmaceutical companies, which can increase drug prices," and added that their efforts should "not severely hurt the benefits of drug companies (*Bangkok Post*, 4/17).



## Japan: Amending Constitution spurs arms race

*The Catholic church in Japan is seeking international support to counter a government move to amend the country's Peace Constitution. The proposed change would enable Japan to integrate its defense forces more closely with global U.S. military strategy. However, church officials say amending Article 9 would pose a serious threat to neighboring countries and would further isolate Japan from the rest of Asia. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns has written to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe urging him to retain Article 9 (see <http://www.maryknollogc.org/peace/index.htm>).*

A bill calling for a referendum to revise the Constitution passed the Diet's lower house April 13. Abe hoped it would be approved in the upper chamber by May 3, the 60th anniversary of the country's Constitution.

Article 9 provides that "the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes" and declares that "land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained." Abe's Liberal Democratic Party wants to revise the article to allow Japan to exercise collective self defense and to engage in war. (See "Japan: Abe seeks more active role for military" in November/December 2006 *NewsNotes*.)

If the proposed change won popular approval in a referendum, it would still require a two-thirds vote in both chambers to amend the Constitution. A year ago, polls indicated 70 percent of Japanese voters opposed amending Article 9. Since then North Korea has tested a nuclear device and a half dozen missiles, and some Japanese might have reassessed their position. Days after the missile tests last July, then-Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe said his government was considering whether a pre-emptive strike on North Korean missile bases would violate Japan's Constitution.

The U.S. has long sought closer security ties with Japan. The U.S. currently has 36,000-40,000 military personnel stationed in 135 military installations, covering more than 425 square miles, in 27 municipalities in Japan.

"Already 500 Tomahawk cruise missiles have been deployed at the U.S. naval base in Yokosuka," says Bishop Michael Goro Matsuura, president of the Japan Catholic Council for Justice and Peace. "The Pentagon is reportedly speeding up plans to deploy

advanced Patriot interceptor missiles on U.S. bases in Japan – which will practically integrate Japan's SDF [Self Defense Force]." Nevertheless, he says, those moves are unconstitutional under Article 9.

"(B)ecause of Japan's peace constitution, its military strength has posed a very limited threat to neighboring countries," Bishop Matsuura adds. "A change in Japan's Constitution would change the nature of this threat immediately. There is already a significant arms race going on in the region, and such a constitutional change would obviously exacerbate that arms race enormously. Japan without Article 9 would further isolate the country from the rest of Asia."

Under a 2005 bilateral agreement, "U.S.-Japan Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future," many areas of military cooperation have been strengthened, according to Archbishop Joseph M. Takami of Nagasaki. These include ballistic missile defense, counter-terrorism, intelligence, search and destroy operations, and joint use of bases and facilities in Japan.

Archbishop Takami told an audience March 12 at Georgetown University that Japan has a no-nuclear policy, "and yet this policy (especially not importing nuclear weapons) has been conveniently ignored both by the Japanese government and the U.S. forces based in Japan." Instead, he pleads, "Let us create many no-nuke cities, towns, and villages in the world that will be enlarged into no-nuclear countries, regions and continents towards a world without nuclear weapons."

Archbishop Takami, president of the Japanese Bishops' Commission for Social Concerns, recalls the visit of Pope John Paul II to Japan in 1981. In Hiroshima the Pontiff said, "War is the work of man. War is destruction of human life. War is death. To remember the past is to commit oneself to the future. To remember Hiroshima is to abhor nuclear war." Since the government persists in promoting a radical change to Japan's Constitution – even though it is apt to fuel a regional arms race – now is the time to remind Prime Minister Abe of the Pope's declaration.

### **Faith in action:**

Write to Prime Minister Abe and ask him to withdraw legislation to amend Article 9. Pax Christi USA offers a sample letter at [www.paxchristiusa.org/PleafromJapanesebishops.pdf](http://www.paxchristiusa.org/PleafromJapanesebishops.pdf) as well as an e-mail link to send a letter directly to the Japanese government.



## Philippines: Military aid should be conditional

*Peace advocates are urging Congress to make military aid to the Philippines conditional on improvement in human rights. More than 800 persons have died in alleged extrajudicial killings in the Philippines since President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo took office in 2001, including the assassination last year of Bishop Alberto B. Ramento of the Philippine Independent Church.*

A nine-member delegation of Philippine religious leaders and human rights advocates visited Washington, D.C., in March to call attention to the killings and to support placing conditions on military aid to the Arroyo regime. From 2004 to 2006 the assistance included \$70 million to fight insurgents and \$148 million in equipment.

Two members of the Philippine delegation testified March 14 at a hearing of Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA)'s Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs. They distributed copies of a report from the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, "Let the Stones Cry Out," which documents human rights violations. The 90-page report says the human rights crisis is sustained by "a culture of impunity practiced by the government and its security forces." (The report is available in PDF format on the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns' website, [www.maryknollogc.org](http://www.maryknollogc.org))

At the Boxer hearing, Bishop Eliezer Pascua of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines asked Congress to take action to help end the killings and other human rights abuses, bring to justice those responsible and press the Philippine government to comply with international human rights agreements.

The Philippine government has at times suggested the killings occurred in exchanges of gunfire between the military and insurgents, or happened because the victims themselves were terrorists or members of armed anti-government groups. Most of those claims were dismissed in a January 2007 report by a commission named by Arroyo. Headed by retired Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo, the commission concluded the military was responsible for many of the extrajudicial killings but enjoys virtual impunity under the current administration.

In response, the government announced a six-point action plan, including the establishment of special courts to speed the trials of suspected perpetrators. A lack of accountability for such political killings

remains a critical challenge. To date there have been no convictions in six years.

UN special rapporteur Phillip Alston visited the Philippines for 10 days in February to inquire into the extrajudicial killings and said he found the military "in a state of almost total denial." He said the military would enhance its reputation "by acknowledging the facts and taking genuine steps to investigate." Alston also urged the government to stop stonewalling the Melo Commission report (it was released at his urging), and he said impunity, built on the problem of witness vulnerability, undermines much of the judicial system. "The present message," he said, "is that if you want to preserve your life expectancy, don't act as a witness in a criminal prosecution for killing."

Legislative language was being drafted that could include the following conditions upon U.S. military aid to the Philippines: bringing to justice members of the armed forces against whom there is credible evidence of human rights violations, demonstrating a commitment to democratic elections by guaranteeing the armed forces do not influence the outcome, reversing policies designed to vilify critics of the Filipino government, and reopening the case of Bishop Ramento's murder.

National mid-term elections were set for May 14, with half of the 24 Senate seats, all 250 House seats and 17,000 local government positions up for grabs. Opposition parties painted the election as a referendum on Arroyo's legitimacy (allegations of cheating followed her 2004 election victory), but the administration said it was confident it would retain control of Congress.

Meanwhile, persuading U.S. lawmakers to trim military aid to the Philippines could prove to be an uphill struggle. Peace and justice advocate Peter Monkres describes the Philippines as a fourth front in the U.S. "war against terror" – after Iraq, Afghanistan and U.S. homeland security.

Monkres, a pastor of the First Congregational United Church of Christ, says the U.S. is training the Philippine military in counter insurgency warfare, but he says no war is worth winning if human and civil rights must be sacrificed in the process. Calling for an end to extrajudicial killings, he warns that "no meaningful democratization can occur in places like Iraq, Afghanistan or the Philippines until we abandon the idea that it is possible to build schools on the weekends and engage in firefights the rest of the week."

## East Timor: Can election winners trump poverty?

*East Timorese voters were to return to the polls in early May to elect a president and in June to choose members of parliament. A first round of voting on April 9 – the first presidential poll since the nation became independent in 2002 – produced the May runoff between the two top vote-getters. Once a new parliament is in place this summer, the winners will still face a daunting opposition: widespread poverty and hunger and high unemployment.*

Prime Minister Jose Ramos-Horta and parliament head Francisco Guterres were to face off May 8 in the vote for the largely ceremonial post of president. They finished ahead of six other candidates April 9. Guterres, a former resistance fighter and president of the ruling Fretilin party, captured 28 percent of the vote in the first round. Ramos-Horta, an independent, came in second with 22 percent.



Guterres' Fretilin party controls about two-thirds of the seats in parliament. After the April 9 vote, however, two of the losing parties – with about a quarter of the vote between them – threw their support behind Ramos-Horta.

Ramos-Horta won the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize for championing East Timor's struggle to end decades of brutal Indonesian rule. Outgoing President Xanana Gusmao, a revered resistance fighter, will seek the powerful position of prime minister if his new party, the National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction, wins a parliamentary majority in June. In East Timor the president appoints as prime minister the leader of the majority party or coalition in parliament.

East Timor's new leaders will face monumental challenges. Unemployment stands at 50 percent. Per capita GDP is \$800, and 42 percent of the country's

one million people live below the poverty line. Sixty percent of children under five are malnourished.

East Timor – officially Timor-Leste, or Timor of the Rising Sun – lies about 300 miles north of Australia. Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 after Portugal, its colonial master for more than three centuries, pulled out. Insurgents fought Indonesian rule for 24 years. East Timor voted to separate from Indonesia in a 1999 referendum and declared independence in 2002. In the three-year interim, however, Indonesian troops and their proxies went on a killing spree and razed the capital of Dili.

Today the young nation is emerging from a year of tension and violence that claimed at least 37 lives, produced a change of government and created 150,000 internal refugees. In March 2006 then-Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, a Fretilin member, sacked 40 percent of the armed forces after 400 military personnel from the western part of the country protested alleged discrimination and poor working conditions. The dispute reflected a regional divide in which most military recruits were from the west, while their senior officers – largely drawn from the guerrilla forces that had fought Indonesia for independence – were predominantly from the east. (See "East Timor: Young nation suffers violence," July/August 2006 *NewsNotes*.)

"People feel that they are sick of waiting, waiting for something good," Gusmao said a few days before the April 9 election to determine his successor.

The road ahead for East Timor will not be easy, as one of its most popular politicians knows. "If I win, I will bear a wooden cross almost as heavy as Christ's," says Ramos-Horta, who claims he would rather retire, write books and lecture abroad. "If I lose, I will win my freedom."

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## Nicaragua: Ortega begins second presidency

*On November 6, 2006, when Daniel Ortega was elected again to the Nicaraguan presidency, many questioned what his new government would really be able to change. Like the rest of Latin America, Nicaragua was reeling from the effects of neoliberalism and faced increasing demands for real change. The Ortega government's first months have shown a desire to bring about a transformation, but difficult*

*challenges might limit the extent of those changes.*

In his first week in office, Ortega announced the Zero Hunger program which will provide financial and technical assistance to 75,000 of the country's poorest farm families. The program aims to use the model of rural development developed by Orlando Nuñez Soto, who will direct the program. Of the 750

families that have participated in the program thus far, 80 percent have improved their diet, both in quantity and quality, and have achieved financial solvency. According to a Witness for Peace analysis, "Through its revolving loan program, the model provides small-scale farming families with livestock, seed, innovative technology, low-interest credit, and technical assistance for running a farm in which waste is efficiently reused to minimize costs and maximize production." The aim of the Zero Hunger program is to create 15,000 such holistic farms each year. Though many are concerned about the government's ability to expand the project to a national level, Nuñez says the plan will be implemented with the assistance of hundreds of civil society organizations.

Another early sign of hope was Ortega's choice of people with long histories of popular struggle with grassroots organizations to compose his cabinet. Minister of Labor Jeanette Chavez Gomez is a former guerilla, labor rights lawyer and founder of the National Consumer Defense Network. In addition to raising wages, she has said she will increase inspections of maquila factories for labor and safety violations, though companies are already threatening to leave if too many demands are placed on them.

Ruth Herrera, the new director of ENACAL, the national water company, once led the campaign against its former directors, claiming they deliberately were looting and mismanaging the company in order to facilitate its privatization. Herrera is also co-author of the General Water Law which, if passed, would guarantee permanent state ownership of ENACAL.

In the area of education, Ortega has taken an important step by declaring an end to school autonomy, a structural adjustment required by the International Monetary Fund which shifted decision-making to the local level. Autonomy also moved the responsibility for fundraising to the local level, resulting in the imposition of monthly fees, the main reason over one million children do not attend school and illiteracy rates have doubled to 35 percent. While many welcome this change, and school attendance has skyrocketed, the question of where the government will get the money to run the schools system remains. According to the newspaper *La Prensa*, the amount of funding that autonomous schools accrued in parental contributions in one month during 2004 exceeded the Education Ministry's school maintenance budget for all of 2006.

Ortega has stepped up demands on Union Fenosa, the Spanish energy company that bought Nicaragua's



Daniel Ortega

two energy distributors in 2000. Despite rate hikes, the company did not invest enough to avoid rolling blackouts throughout 2006. Ortega has now given an ultimatum that the company must "invest in Nicaragua or else the government will take measures to guarantee services to the people of Nicaragua."

In the international sphere, Ortega is taking a strong line with richer Northern counterparts and has strengthened alliances with Southern partners. He has called on both the U.S. and European Union to provide compensation funds for Nicaragua to offset the effects of trade agreements with those countries. He also asked the U.S. to provide \$300 million to assist former Contras who had been promised housing, land and farm credits after the civil war (which featured U.S.-backed Contras against the Sandinista government), but who subsequently have been ignored by successive governments.

Finally, Ortega is deepening Nicaragua's relationships with members of ALBA (the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas), an alternative proposal to the Free Trade Area of the Americas that currently counts Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, and a handful of Caribbean countries as members. Venezuela has pledged to give \$600 million a year in aid (compared to a total of \$3-400 million that Nicaragua currently receives from all donors) and has installed 32 electrical plants that generate 60 megawatts of energy, more than half of the country's current energy deficit. Cuba promises to provide an additional 32 power plants by September of this year. Deliveries of 13,000 tons of fertilizer and two million fluorescent light bulbs have helped to ease the costs of the Zero Hunger program and cut energy consumption in these times of shortages. Venezuela and Cuba have also provided at least 3,200 cataract surgeries free of charge to impoverished Nicaraguans and have helped in the construction of a center for ophthalmology in Ciudad Sandino where a team of Cuban doctors will operate with surgical equipment also donated by Cuba.

Despite a public debt equal to about 120 percent of the GDP, rising illiteracy, increased poverty, and other difficulties, Ortega's first months in his new presidency have renewed hope for many Nicaraguans. His willingness to confront power-brokers in the global north and to forge alliances with other leaders who are challenging neoliberal policies guarantee that Ortega's current presidency will not be ignored.

## Bolivia: U.S. funding shapes policies

*Much of the following article is based on "The Shifting Weight of U.S. Funding in Bolivia," an article written by Maryknoll lay missionary Evan Cuthbert for the Andean Information Network.*

U.S. aid to Bolivia, especially tied to anti-drug efforts, has created dependency and shaped the internal policies of South America's most impoverished nation. In the past, the threat of funding cuts as a result of "de-certification," a unilateral decision by the U.S. that Bolivia had failed in its anti-drug efforts, led successive Bolivian administrations to accept policy impositions often to the detriment of its internal political stability. For example, the U.S.-imposed policy of forced coca eradication (coca is the base ingredient in cocaine) led to violent conflicts with farmers and numerous human rights violations while having little impact on the flow of drugs.

New funding sources and an innovative drug policy have allowed President Evo Morales to decrease Bolivia's dependence on U.S. aid. Venezuelan and European aid, which do not carry the intrusive conditions of U.S. funding, as well as significant increases in hydrocarbons revenue, have provided a counterweight to the U.S. role in Bolivia's finances. Morales' drug control policy of "coca yes, cocaine zero" values indigenous and other licit uses of coca, while encouraging coca farmers to collaborate in drug interdiction efforts and to negotiate voluntary reductions of coca through a variety of incentives. Despite U.S. opposition, the new policy appears to be working, especially when compared to anti-drug efforts Colombia and Peru where increases in coca production are much greater. The Morales policy demonstrates the administration's commitment to controlling the production of coca and to anti-drug efforts while more successfully respecting human rights and avoiding violent conflicts in Bolivia.

Still, U.S. aid, for instance the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA), remains vital for Bolivia's poverty reduction and anti-narcotics efforts. The ATPDEA, begun in 1991, lowers import tariffs in the U.S. for 5,600 Bolivian products. While the effectiveness of the U.S.-imposed drug certification process is hotly debated, the effectiveness of the ATPDEA as an aid program is not: about 30 percent of Bolivian exports to the U.S., Bolivia's second largest trading partner, are affected by the ATPDEA. Since taking office in January 2006, Vice

President Alvaro Garcia Linera has visited Washington twice petitioning for a five-year extension of the ATPDEA, rather than the yearly or six-month extension as has been the case, arguing such an extension would allow for more stable economic development.

In Washington, the ATPDEA has bipartisan support. However, in 2006 some members of Congress wanted to exclude Bolivia from the ATPDEA because it had not negotiated a free trade agreement with the U.S., as had Colombia and Peru. Rejecting such arm-twisting, in April House Ways and Means Committee Chair Charles Rangel (D-NY) and Trade Subcommittee Chair Sander Levin (D-MI) introduced legislation to provide a two-year extension of the ATPDEA before the current extension runs out on July 1, 2007. Rep. Levin said that the 15-year program should not be interrupted "as we consider more comprehensive trade relationships that will promote mutual economic growth and broaden its benefits more widely." He gave the ATPDEA high marks for stimulating economic growth and creating viable alternatives to the drug trade.

Another potentially massive aid package for Bolivia is the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA). The MCA, established in 2003 by the Bush administration to direct aid to the world's most impoverished countries, is managed by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) in the State Department. The MCA qualifies countries that meet a laundry list of requirements; it deemed Bolivia eligible in 2005. The Morales administration is preparing a technical proposal seeking at least \$600 million to build new highway systems in Bolivia's resource rich north.

Even though Bolivia has not submitted its proposal yet, hopes for MCA funds are politically charged. In March, an AP article stating that Bolivia was "left out" MCA funding made headlines throughout the country – a characterization rejected by U.S. and Bolivian officials. Furthermore, the MCA is criticized as a "foreign aid slush fund" that the U.S. administration can use to dole out rewards to "friendly" countries. It would be naïve to assume that the Bush administration's future decisions on MCA funding are not influenced by its poor relations with Morales. If Bolivia does not receive MCA funding it is likely to be viewed as a reproach against Morales and that once again the U.S. is using its wealth to manipulate Bolivia for its own interests while ignoring the suffering of the majority of Bolivians who live in poverty.

## Bolivia: Groups organize to monitor mining

*On March 9-11, 2007 in Oruro, Bolivia, civil society groups and religious organizations from throughout the Americas gathered for an event entitled "Environmental Justice and Mining in Latin America," hosted by the Center for Ecology and Andean Peoples, an Oblate-funded NGO. More than 40 people from Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Guatemala, the U.S., and Canada attended, including Maryknoll lay missionary Evan Cuthbert, who lives and works in Bolivia, who wrote the following report.*

Participants highlighted the effects of mining activity on local communities and beyond. Some common experiences include:

- Mining activity often takes place in communities that have had agriculture-based economies for centuries. Local farmers are forced to compete with mining companies for access to water with rules that prioritize access for mining interests (see below). In some cases large portions of the local water sources are owned by large foreign-based mining companies. If local communities are able to gain access, the water is often contaminated as a result of upstream mining.

- Mining activity often takes place in watershed areas (i.e. in the Andes, the water source for the large population areas on the coast of Peru and Chile.) The mining sector uses tremendous amounts of water which then is returned to the watershed even though it has not been fully decontaminated.

- Local communities benefit little from the profits made in the mines, yet suffer the worst effects of mining - they are some of the most impoverished and polluted communities.

- Local communities have been marginalized from the decisions affecting them and in some cases they have even been forced to give up their land with little compensation.

Participants noted an increase in conflicts in recent years in areas where mining activity occurs. These conflicts come at a time of increased mining exploration and exploitation in Latin America, spurred on by a growing global demand for minerals and some of the highest prices in history. Yet, many new mines are being challenged by local churches, environmental groups, and indigenous organizations. These groups seek to change the rules that have excluded them from the participating in past decisions that have affected their communities and local ecology.

Economic policies, especially free trade policies, have helped create the conditions for conflict. Mining nations have prioritized the rights of mining companies over the rights of the local community and the environment. International mining companies are often able to obtain favored access to local resources (such as water) through their governmental connections and legal, or illegal, lobbying. Local and national governments often act in conjunction with these mining corporations. When local communities protest the presence of mining activity in their communities or their mining practices, military and police are often brought in to "defend the rights" of the mining company. As a result, many local community and environmental activists, including several participants in Oruro, have endured threats, harassment and public slander, and witnessed the injury and even death of fellow community members.

Even if a government were opposed to a mining corporation, free trade agreements undermine the ability of local communities and national governments to protect their environments. Since NAFTA was implemented in 1994, most U.S. bilateral trade agreements include a special provision called investor to state lawsuits. With these, international corporations can sue a country because of its environmental laws if these laws in any way decrease the profit-making activity of that corporation. In these lawsuits, corporations demand compensation for not only real losses but also for losses in projected earnings. The proliferation of these lawsuits has significantly affected the ability of governments to create new labor, environmental, or public health and safety laws.

As a result of increased conflicts in mining communities and deepening ties between local organizations throughout Latin America, the participants in Oruro formed the Observatorio de Conflictos Mineros en America Latina (Mining Conflicts in Latin America Watch). The Observatorio seeks "to fortify the voice among those in the region who struggle for environmental justice, for the rights of communities and in defense of the ecosystems affected by mining." Committed to nonviolent action, they are joining efforts to take on giant transnational companies such as U.S.-based mining giants Newmont Mining, Apex Silver and Coeur d'Alene who operate some of the largest mines in Latin America.

For more information, visit the Observatorio's website: [www.conflictosmineros.net](http://www.conflictosmineros.net)

## Haiti's debt: A matter of urgency

*For more information, see the November-December 2006 issue of NewsNotes.*

According to the Jubilee USA Network and the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, the Haitian people are still paying for the crimes of their past leaders. Forty-five percent of the country's current external debt was incurred by Duvalier dictators, while the country's lenders turned a blind eye to their corruption. Not only did these loans fail to benefit the Haitian people, the consequent debt service payments continue to cost the country millions of dollars that could be better spent on education and health. Meanwhile, harmful economic policies mandated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank continue to undermine the country's ability to chart its own development path.

In April 2006, the World Bank and the IMF added Haiti to their heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) debt cancellation program. Yet, the HIPC program will not actually cancel Haiti's debt for several years, and will come with painful strings attached: the banks will require Haiti to undertake neo-liberal economic "reforms" that will aggravate the country's poverty. These economic policy strings will continue to drain Haiti's productive capabilities and reduce its already minimal social safety net. Under the HIPC conditions, Haiti will not qualify for cancellation until 2009 at the earliest—by which time the country will have sent the international financial institutions \$138 million taken from programs to build schools and provide clean water and health care.

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Haiti's largest creditor, also added Haiti to its debt relief program in 2007 after protracted negotiations. But IDB debt relief also will take time, and impose painful economic "reforms." In the meantime, Haitian children will continue to die of preventable diseases, and grow older without learning how to read.

The IDB only recently agreed to join other multilateral and bilateral creditors in canceling debt owed to it by the poorest countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. In response to the announcement of the IDB that they would cancel the debt of Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Guyana and Bolivia, Jubilee South/Americas issued a public statement. Excerpts follow.

*... Although the IDB decision comes as a response to the campaign promoted by Jubilee South*

*and other networks and movements in those countries and all around the world to demand the total and unconditional cancellation of debts, we cannot accept its terms nor the expectation created around it.*

*In order to benefit the affected population, any debt "relief" initiative should contribute to breaking the economic and political dependence suffered by Southern countries by promoting the sovereignty and self-determination of nations and the full force of human and environmental rights. It should also acknowledge the illegitimacy of debts claimed, most of which were taken by non-constitutional or corrupt governments, without asking for the opinion of the population and for the purpose of implementing the adjustment, privatization, ... and liberalization policies that Latin American peoples have been denouncing as being genocide.*

*The "forgiveness" of debts approved by the IDB does not seem to be along these lines. Rather, it seems to conform to the history of debt reductions engineered by lenders themselves, which have brought relief for large capitalists anxious to keep on concentrating wealth as well as increased conditionalities and difficulties to be faced by nations. In addition to the fact that these are partial reductions of debts whose legitimacy has not been questioned, the requirement for strong political and economic conditionalities remains in force and the availability of future loans shall be reduced in direct proportion to the amounts currently being cancelled....*

*Camille Chalmers, of the Haitian Platform for an Alternative Development (PAPDA), [said] ... "Once again, these promises by the IDB fail to solve the debt crisis. They impose two more years of the same policies that are killing us."*

*It is certainly not a coincidence that "forgiveness" is granted for debts that should in fact be "repudiated," while the IDB discusses the restructuring of its operations in a context of strong controversy over its mandate and role ....*

Immediate cancellation of Haiti's debt to the World Bank, IMF, and IDB would free much needed resources to fight poverty and help the country to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The IMF projects that without debt relief, more than one-tenth of the central government's revenue over the next four years will go to foreign creditors to service the country's external debt.



**Faith in action:**

Call your member of Congress today; ask him or her to co-sponsor the Haiti debt cancellation resolution introduced by a bi-partisan group in the House of Representatives (H. Res. 241). To co-sponsor the

resolution, tell your member's staff to call Kathleen Sengstock in Rep. Maxine Waters' (D-CA) office at (202) 225-2201. If your representative has already co-sponsored the resolution, please call to thank him/her.

**ILEA – a new SOA?**

*In 1995, President Clinton called for the establishment of a network of International Law Enforcement Academies (ILEAs) throughout the world; the graduates of these academies, funded by the U.S. State Department, would be trained to combat international drug trafficking, criminality, and terrorism through strengthened international cooperation.*

In March, a delegation from School of the Americas Watch (SOAW) traveled to El Salvador, where they were able to visit the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), a training center for Latin American police forces. During this time of noticeable increases in human rights abuses by police around Latin America, some question whether the ILEA, which opened at the end of 2005, will help improve this situation or will only increase the efficiency of abusive forces as the School of the Americas (now known as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, WHINSEC) has done for so many years with Latin American military forces.

The ILEA in El Salvador is the fifth academy of its kind; others existing in Budapest, Hungary (1995); Bangkok, Thailand (1999); Gaborne, Botswana (2001); and Roswell, New Mexico (2001). The Salvadoran Congress approved the school by a simple majority despite the Constitutional requirement of a two-thirds vote to endorse such an international treaty.

The fading division between the role of the military and police in Latin America is especially concerning to some. (Costa Rica, which has abolished its army, denied the use of its land for the academy due to the school's willingness to work with military personnel.) Whereas in the 1970s and 1980s, the military was most often used to repress internal social forces, more recently, police forces are assuming that role, using increasingly militarized tactics.

The SOAW delegation toured the academy and met with its directors through the efforts of a Salvadoran human rights organization, Instituto de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad de Centro America (IDHUCA, the University of Central America Human

Rights Institute). The IDHUCA office is located a few yards from the site where six Jesuit priests, their cook and her daughter were killed in 1989. While the IDHUCA initially worked against the approval of the ILEA, once it was passed in Congress, it agreed to provide human rights courses inside the academy.

Despite the fact that most human rights groups in El Salvador denounce the academy, the IDHUCA defends its relationship with ILEA because every student must take at least one class from the IDHUCA, which controls all course content and monitors the academy from within. Overall, the academy is helpful, according to the IDHUCA, in that it focuses on investigative skills, which are lacking in many Latin American police forces. Human rights organizations have pointed to increased use of torture by police where there are poor investigative branches.

While it is too early to say what the effect of the ILEA will be in Latin America, the lack of transparency at the academy will severely limit observation possibilities. The ILEA will not divulge the names of students, nor how many come from each country, saying that information would subject the students to increased danger from organized crime. Without such information it will be impossible to see if the school is improving or worsening human rights abuses. The only outside organization that will have access to such information will be the IDHUCA. But it will be difficult to play an autonomous monitoring role while being paid by the academy.

A coalition of civil society organizations in El Salvador, the Movement for the Self-Determination of the People, criticizes the academy for its lack of transparency and granting of immunity to ILEA officials. They say the money being spent by the Salvadoran government for the academy, which is also an undisclosed amount, thought to be over \$600,000, would be better spent on other items. As Fr. Roy Bourgeois, founder of the SOA Watch, has stated, "Salvadorans don't need police units trained in military tactics by the U.S. government; they need food, living wage jobs and access to healthcare."

## Brazil: Challenges to ethanol use

*When President Bush visited Brazil in March, landless families and small farmers around the country occupied ethanol distilleries and other agribusiness sites in protest against the principal goal of Bush's visit, to sign an agreement for increased ethanol production in Brazil. Having announced a goal of a 20 percent reduction in gasoline use by 2017, the United States is asking Brazil, the world's largest manufacturer of ethanol, to boost production. However, landless families protest that expanding sugar crops for ethanol represents a continuation of Brazil's colonial history where the country's economic choices are based on external, not internal, needs, and that it will exacerbate existing problems in rural Brazil such as landlessness, hunger, environmental degradation, unemployment, and violent conflicts. As an alternative, they suggest that Brazil build a decentralized rural economy that will allow farmers to diversify their crops to produce for internal consumption first and energy and export needs secondarily.*

For the U.S. to replace its current fossil fuels usage with biofuels, it would be necessary to plant 121 percent of its agricultural area. In order to provide even 10 percent of the current gasoline consumption in the U.S., Brazil would have to multiply its already sizeable ethanol production by five times. A University of Campinas study shows that for Brazil to be able to substitute 10 percent of global gasoline use in 20 years, the geographical area planted with sugarcane, which is far more efficient than corn, will increase from six million to 30 million hectares.

Ethanol advocates stress that most sugar is grown mostly in southeast Brazil, which does not affect the Amazon region. But sugar production, which has higher per hectare profits, is pushing wheat growers out of the center-west states, which in turn drives cattle grazers further north into the Amazon, resulting in greater deforestation there. Speculation over future land use is driving a buying frenzy, resulting in loss of land for many small farmers, thus increasing migration to already overloaded cities like São Paulo as well

as escalating violent conflicts over land.

Another central problem with increased sugar production is the long history of worker exploitation in the sugar plantations of Brazil. Brazil has the lowest cost of production for sugar due to horrible working conditions and lack of environmental protections. (In São Paulo the cost of production is US\$165 per ton; in Europe it is US\$700.) A São Paulo University study shows that the required rate of productivity for sugarcane cutters has grown steadily. In the 1980s the average worker was expected to cut between five and eight tons of sugar per day. Today the expected minimum is from 12 to 15 tons per day. Despite this increase, cane cutters have seen their average income decline by more than half in real terms under this quota-based pay system. The result is a registered 416 deaths in sugar-based ethanol production in Brazil in 2005 alone. Some sugar plantations have been found guilty of even using slave labor in sugar production.

Environmentally, increased ethanol production

will not be as positive as many envision. Sugar cane is usually burnt just before harvesting to facilitate the cutting, reduce transportation costs and increase its energy potential. The problem is that this burning liberates carbon gas, ozone, nitrogen gases and sulphur (responsible for acid rain) and provokes significant losses in soil nutrients as well as facilitating erosion and weed formation.



In addition, large scale planting of sugar diminishes biological diversity and weakens soil. Scientists estimate that every gallon of ethanol made from sugar requires three to four gallons of water. Most sugar plantations use heavy doses of chemical fertilizers and herbicides, which end up polluting water sources. The use of petroleum-based inputs like these diminishes the effectiveness of ethanol in cutting overall petroleum use. Ethanol made from corn or wheat is even worse, producing a net loss in terms of petroleum use because "about 70 percent more energy is required to produce ethanol than the energy that actually is in the ethanol," according to David Pimentel of Cornell University.

Via Campesina, a coalition of small farmers' organizations, see the current move toward ethanol and biodiesel (made from plant oils like soy and other vegetables) as being driven by an alignment of three large sectors of international capital: oil corporations; agribusiness corporations, especially those that control GMO seeds; and automobile corporations. These sectors' primary goal is to maintain high consumption patterns in the North and extensive planting of sugar and soy in the South. Via Campesina points out that while 100 hectares of sugar production provides one

job, diverse family farms generate 35 jobs. They call for an alternative model of agriculture that favors small, diversified family farms over vast monocrop plantations. They envision agro-ecological farms in which the residues from ethanol production would be used to increase animal production whose residues would serve to fertilize sugarcane. They want to expand on examples like Cooperbio, a biodiesel cooperative that has made farming a viable option for hundreds of small farmers while producing food and energy for local consumption.

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## Immigration: Reform, not raids

*The number of raids of immigrant communities by federal agents has grown in recent months; a March 6 raid by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents in Massachusetts, when 361 factory workers were faced with deportation, was one of the nation's largest. Advocates for justice for all immigrants, including the undocumented, fear that unless comprehensive reform of the U.S.'s immigration laws takes place by August, the end of the summer session of Congress, more forced entries will occur, fomenting fear within a community that already lives in the shadows.*

In January, religious, labor and civil rights organizations issued a statement calling on the president to issue an executive order that declares an immediate moratorium on community and work site raids by ICE agents. The statement reads, "[We] urge the administration to work with Congress to build humane, rational and fair immigration policies. We call for this action after witnessing the worksite raids that occurred ... in Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Texas and Utah ... Strong-arm tactics and the excessive use of force in the raids were evident. Workers who appeared to be Latino were separated from non-Latino looking workers. Federal officials refused to provide timely information to family members, clergy or attorneys, and in some cases threatened to arrest those seeking information about their loved ones. ...

"Workplace raids continue a campaign of terror that criminalizes workers who are only seeking jobs and a better life. They do nothing to fix the nation's broken immigration system and only serve to polarize how immigrants are perceived. They promote discrimination and racial profiling, and sow fear and uncertainty in the nation's immigrant communities.

Such actions weaken the social and economic fabric of our community and threaten the basic civil and human rights of immigrant and non-immigrant communities alike. ..."

The most likely legislation to address the concerns of the immigrant rights community is H.R. 1645, the Security Through Regularized Immigration and a Vibrant Economy Act of 2007 (STRIVE), introduced by Reps. Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) and Jeff Flake (R-AZ). In a recent letter to the Senate, San Bernardino's Bishop Gerald R. Barnes, chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration, writes that the STRIVE Act "best comports with the principles needed for a just and humane immigration reform bill. The legislation contains a viable program for legalizing the undocumented population and giving them an opportunity for permanent residency, a new worker program with appropriate worker protections and wages, and reductions in family immigration backlogs."

However, he writes, the bishops "have some concerns about several provisions in Title II of the legislation ... For example, we believe that passport fraud provisions found in section 221 of the measure would place bona fide refugees at risk, many of whom must resort to the use of false travel documents obtained in their home country because they cannot obtain government documents from authorities that may be persecuting them. We also object to aspects of section 234 c of the bill that seeks to deal with penalties for persons who harbor and smuggle aliens. Although the section would exempt religious organizations from some of its penalties, it would place other groups and individuals, including labor unions, at risk of prosecution for providing basic needs assistance to undocumented immigrants. We believe these and other

provisions in Title II should be removed from the legislation or substantially modified.”

Barnes’s letter mentions that President Bush’s proposal for reform “would make cuts to family-based immigration as well as impose fines and wait-times for legalization that are far beyond what most immigrants could bear. As we understand it, the Administration’s proposal would effectively leave many immigrants seeking to legalize their status in a permanent underclass and would encourage family

breakdown in immigrant communities. Although we appreciate the President’s initiative in encouraging comprehensive immigration reform, we see this proposal as a step in the wrong direction.”

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

Contact your representative and senators and urge a moratorium on ICE workplace raids as soon as possible. For more information, go to the American Friends Service Committee’s website, [www.afsc.org](http://www.afsc.org)

## **Climate change: Impacts, vulnerability, responses**

On April 13, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change issued its most forceful report to date. The report addresses the impact of climate change regarding the following points: fresh water resources and their management; ecosystems; food, fiber and forest products; coastal systems and low-lying areas; industry, settlement, society; and health.

- Drought-affected areas will likely increase in extent while heavy precipitation events will likely augment flood risk

- Approximately 20-30 percent of plant and animal species assessed so far are likely to be at increased risk of extinction if increases in global average temperature exceed 1.5-2.5 degrees.

- At lower latitudes, especially seasonally dry and tropical regions, crop productivity is projected to decrease for even local temperature increases (1-2 degrees), which would increase risk of hunger.

- Many millions more people are projected to be flooded every year due to sea-level rise by the 2080s. The numbers affected will be largest in the megadeltas of Asia and Africa while small islands are especially vulnerable.

- Costs and benefits of climate change for industry, settlement, and society will vary widely by location and scale. In the aggregate, however, net effects will tend to be more negative the larger the change in climate.

The area of health is projected to be affected extensively for millions of people, particularly those with low adaptive capacity:

- Increases in malnutrition and consequent disorders, with implications for child growth and development;

- Increased deaths, disease and injury due to heat waves, floods, storms, fires and droughts,

- The increased burden of diarrhea disease;
- The increased frequency of cardio-respiratory diseases due to higher concentrations of ground level-ozone related to climate change; and
- Altered spatial distribution of some infectious disease vectors.

While some parts of the world are more vulnerable than others to the immediate consequences of climate change, the report is clear in specifically naming all areas of the world — Africa, Asia, Australia and New Zealand, Europe, Latin America, North America, polar regions and small islands — as likely to be affected.

The report received broad media coverage accompanied by startling photographic images of aspects of the planet that correspond to each category. The images have the potential for inspiring attitudinal and behavioral change that mere facts are powerless to generate. Given the responses of civil society as well as initiatives appearing in governance sectors on the state and local levels, along with recent federal court decisions upholding environmental laws previously enacted, and the Supreme Court decision regarding the Environmental Protection Agency’s authority to regulate carbon emissions, it would seem that in the United States a platform for change is being established in spite of the lack of leadership by the present administration. In the United Nations, under the leadership of the United Kingdom and supported by more than 30 nations, climate change has been introduced as a valid topic for consideration by the Security Council. Certainly, peace and security will be increasingly threatened with increased competition for dwindling resources. Perhaps this indicates a dawning realization that all things are interconnected.

## Torture: Support “Restoring the Constitution Act”

*The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT), in which the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is an active member, is one of several organizations and coalitions working hard to undo the disastrous effects of the Military Commission Act (MCA), passed by the U.S. Congress in September 2006.*

Torture, emphasizes NRCAT, violates the basic dignity of the human person that all religions, in their highest ideas, hold dear. It undermines the moral values of care for the vulnerable, of hospitality, of justice, and of community wholeness and peace. Torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment also is a violation of U.S. and international law.



The Military Commissions Act:

- Narrows the criminal penalties for violating Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions to cover only “grave breaches” of Common Article 3, rather than all breaches of the treaty, leaving to the president the definition of “non-grave breaches”;
- Applies the new, narrower criminal sanctions on torture and cruel treatment retroactively, including all conduct from Sept. 11, 2001 to the passage of the MCA in September 2006;
- Denies basic legal safeguards to detainees that the president names as “enemy combatants”;
- Abolishes the historic right of habeas corpus for detainees – the most important and ancient of all checks on abuse and unlawful detention;
- Strips U.S. federal courts of the ability to hear detainee claims that their treatment violated the Geneva Conventions;
- Distorts and clouds the language of international laws of war by allowing any person who provides “material support” for hostilities to be declared an “unlawful enemy combatant” by the president, radically expanding the concept of “combatant” and permitting the administration to lock up persons as “enemy combatants” who are thousands of miles from any battlefield because they in some way “support” the “hostilities.”

The Military Commissions Act of 2006 allows brutal, abusive, and degrading treatment to have a legal foothold in U.S. policy. It is dangerous because of what it does not do and because of what it does do. It does not absolutely forbid all brutal, abusive conduct by U.S. non-military interrogators under any and every circumstance. And, it authorizes conditions and procedures in which torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of detainees could flourish.

The Restoring the Constitution Act (RCA), now being considered by the U.S. Senate (S. 576) and the U.S. House of Representatives (H.R. 1415), would right many of the wrongs done by the Military Commissions Act.

The RCA:

- Reasserts adherence to the Geneva Conventions, assuring humane treatment for all prisoners, military and civilian.
- Prohibits evidence obtained through torture to be used in court. The RCA returns the U.S. to outlawing hear-say testimony and testimony obtained through “coercion.”
- Holds accountable those who have authorized or committed acts of torture. Removes the current provision for retroactive immunity to U.S. personnel who authorized or committed war crimes.
- Clarifies the definition of “enemy combatant” and no longer gives the president the power to decide who is in that category.
- Restores due process. The RCA restores the right of habeas corpus; innocent people including non-citizen detainees could no longer be held indefinitely without charge or trial as currently permitted.

### **Faith in action:**

In the next 30 days, contact your members of Congress and urge their support of S. 576 and H.R. 1415. You can schedule a meeting with your members of Congress or with their staff in one of the district offices or in Washington, D.C. to discuss this issue, or send an email via [www.tortureisamoralissue.org](http://www.tortureisamoralissue.org). For additional information see the National Religious Campaign Against Torture at [www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org).

## Corporate accountability: Lagging on climate change

*A group of socially responsible investors have developed a Climate Watch List - a list of 10 companies identified as lagging behind their industry peers in their responses to climate change. As part of this effort, investors have filed shareholder resolutions with the 10 companies - and 26 other U.S. businesses - aimed at improving their focus and attention to climate change.*

The Climate Watch companies include electric power companies, oil producers, coal companies and other businesses that the investors believe are not adequately dealing with potential climate-related business impacts, whether from physical changes, emerging climate regulations, or growing global demand for climate-friendly technologies and services.



The shareholder resolutions are among a record 42 global warming resolutions filed with U.S. companies as part of the 2007 proxy season - nearly double the number of climate-related resolutions filed just three years ago. The resolutions, seeking greater disclosure from companies on their responses and strategies to climate-related business trends, were filed by state and city pension funds and labor, foundations, religious and other institutional shareholders.

The Climate Watch companies are:

**Dominion Resources Inc.:** Dominion has balked at shareholder requests the past three years to disclose its potential financial exposure from foreseeable climate regulations. The Virginia-based company emitted 62 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> from its power plants in 2004.

**TXU Corp:** The company had proposed building 11 coal-fired plants in Texas. The company is being sold to two private equity firms and as part of the buy-out, the new owners reached an agreement with two environmental organizations to reduce the number of new plants to three. The new owners also pledged to reduce GHG emissions. However, there are questions among community groups in Texas as to how to hold the new private owners accountable.

**ConocoPhillips:** ConocoPhillips has made no significant investments in wind, solar and other renewable energy technologies that will be in increasing demand in the years ahead. But as a result of shareholder pressure, the company announced in April that

it would support a mandatory federal policy to cap greenhouse gas emissions and take other measures to reduce its climate impact.

**Wells Fargo:** Unlike Bank of America and JP Morgan Chase, which have set specific goals to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from their lending activities, Wells Fargo has been unresponsive to shareholder requests for comprehensive emission reduction goals relating to its business.

**Bed, Bath & Beyond:** Unlike Lowe's, the Home Depot and other major retailers, Bed Bath & Beyond has been unresponsive to shareholder requests that it disclose its strategies and performance on energy efficiency and other climate-related issues. Last year's resolution requesting a report on its energy efficiency efforts received more than 27 percent support.

**Massey Energy:** Given that coal combustion accounts for about 35 percent of all GHG emissions in the U.S. and given the growing regulatory momentum to reduce emissions from power plants, shareholders have filed a resolution with the Virginia-based company requesting a report on how the company is responding to growing regulatory and competitive pressure to significantly reduce GHG emissions. Massey is the nation's fourth largest coal producer.

**Consol Energy:** This Pennsylvania-based company is the largest bituminous coal producer in the U.S. As at Massey Energy, shareholders are seeking information as to how Consol is responding to pressure to significantly reduce GHG emissions.

**ExxonMobil:** This company has been unresponsive to investor requests for a decade regarding strategies intended to meet growing demand for diversified energy sources. Several resolutions on the proxy request that the board develop comprehensive GHG emission reduction goals and disclose its plans for responding to climate legislation.

**ACE Limited:** This insurance company has refused various investor requests to disclose its strategies, policies and potential exposure from climate change.

**Allegheny Energy:** Based in Greensburg, PA, Allegheny is one of the 20 largest CO<sub>2</sub> emitters in the country's electric power industry, with 45 million tons emitted in 2004. Allegheny has not responded to repeated requests for disclosure regarding its potential exposure to foreseeable climate regulations.

For more details, see: <http://www.ceres.org> and <http://www.campaignexxonmobil.org>.



## Resources

- 1) **“The Pursuit of Peace in a Culture of Violence”**: All are welcome to attend Pax Christi USA’s annual conference and 35th anniversary celebration, to be held August 10-12 at Seattle University in Seattle, WA. Pax Christi is thrilled to announce that the keynote speaker will be Jack Jezreel, founder of the JustFaith program. If you would like to buy ad space in the commemorative program book, please send an email to [pcconfbook2007@verzion.net](mailto:pcconfbook2007@verzion.net) for a list of sizes and prices. For more on the conference, including workshop topics and other information, check the Pax Christi website, [www.paxchristiusa.org](http://www.paxchristiusa.org).
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- 2) **Jubilee USA Second Annual Grassroots Conference**: The conference will take place on June 15-17 at Loyola University in downtown Chicago, and will include workshops, speakers, poetry, dance, music, films, and opportunities to network with debt campaigners from across the U.S. and around the world. Learn what you can do to bring an end to the international debt crisis, join campaigns to challenge global poverty, and build the skills and knowledge we need to build an effective movement for economic justice. Thanks to the TransAfrica Forum, the film “Bamako” will be shown at the conference. Need-based travel scholarships are available. If you need such support, or for more information about the conference, please contact Jubilee USA, [www.jubileeusa.org](http://www.jubileeusa.org); phone: (202)783-3566.
- 3) **“Hidden in Plain Sight: Violence Against Women in Mexico and Guatemala”**: This new publication from the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) examines the failure of the Mexican and Guatemalan criminal justice system to effectively tackle the problem of impunity for violence against women and girls. “The police and justice institutions in Mexico and Guatemala are weak, ineffective and often corrupt. These flaws are compounded by gender biases within the institutions, which act to systematically silence and discriminate against women,” said Adriana Beltrán, WOLA Associate on Violence Against Women. Download the report for free from WOLA’s website, [www.wola.org](http://www.wola.org), or contact WOLA for a copy, (202)797-2171, 1630 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 200. Washington, D.C. 20009.
- 4) **NAFTA From Below: Maquiladora Workers, Campesinos, and Indigenous Communities Speak Out on the Impact of Free Trade in Mexico**: This new publication from the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras (CJM) discloses NAFTA’s impact on those most affected by it - Mexican workers and farmers - and their organized resistance in fighting for a better world. The heart of the book is testimonies from maquiladora workers, most of them women in the north and center of the country as well as indigenous communities and farmers in the south. Their words document in detail what free trade has meant for the people of Mexico. Published in English. Available in Spanish in June 2007. \$25 each, plus \$5 shipping and handling. To order, contact CJM, 4207 Willowbrook, San Antonio, TX 78228; (210)732-8957; fax: (210)732-8423, or go to the CJM website at [www.coalitionforjustice.net](http://www.coalitionforjustice.net)
- 5) **What Happened to the Women? Gender and Reparations for Human Rights Violation**: This book of case studies, from the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) with support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), sheds light on as yet misunderstood and under-researched questions: Can governments in new or reforming democracies hope to repair the particular forms of gendered harm suffered by their populations during periods of political violence and repression? Can this be achieved through the integration of gender concerns into the conceptualization of state-sponsored massive reparations schemes? The chapters on South Africa, Rwanda and Sierra Leone are posted under Gender on the AfricaFiles website, [www.africafiles.org](http://www.africafiles.org); each case study provides a short history and a contextual background on the state of gender relations and women’s status prior to as well as during and after violent conflict. 364 pages; ISBN: 978-0-9790772-0-3/0-9790772-0-6; \$30 each. For more information, visit the book’s website at <http://press.ssrc.org/RubioMarin/>.