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Due to ongoing security measures, there is a significant delay in delivery of mail to Congressional offices. It is advised that constituents either use email or fax, or send mail to Congresspersons' home offices, rather than to the Washington, D.C. office.

Water: An emerging understanding

In this issue of NewsNotes we invite your own reflections on water. To encourage this, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns Advisory Committee on the Integrity of Creation shares below some key points that are giving shape to our understanding and a framework for MOGC efforts on this important issue.

WATER is its own reality, a dimension of planet Earth, ancient and life-giving. It claims its own "right to be" by the very fact that it is. Oceans probably arose over four billion years ago from the condensation of the vapor in the atmosphere. All the water now in circulation has been here since the planet was first formed, no more, no less. So, water has its own story to tell, maintaining its integrity over eons of time, and plays its own role in the on-going cosmic venture. Life in all its expressions has emerged from water. It is generous gift and gracious friend. St. Francis named it our "sister." To honor water in and of itself is to go deep into cosmic origins and the very mystery of creation.

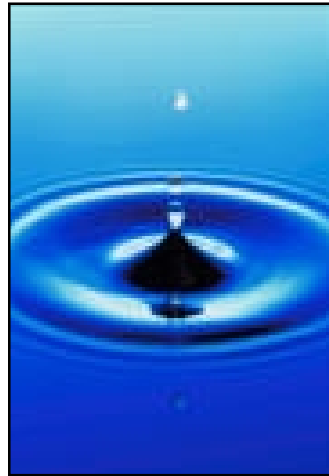
To understand water in this light, as a member of the community of life on Earth, and to speak out of that truth challenges our assumptions, our thinking, our language ...

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.

WATER is an "endangered species," its purity, nurturing power, free-flow and availability for all under attack. Due to human activity, water is being poisoned by massive dumpings, polluted by excessive run-off. On every continent, it is dammed and re-directed, robbed from the poor, wasted by the rich and ignored as an essential element that belongs to all creation. The disparities between those for whom it is readily available and those

who trek long miles to obtain a bucket are all too apparent. The competition only increases as the supply diminishes. Wars over access to water are already being waged and the threat of more is on the horizon.

WATER is on the world agenda today as a "human right." In using this language of "rights," there is an implicit acknowledgment that increasingly water is being viewed no longer as a public good meant for all but rather as an "economic good," a commodity that can be owned by powerful entities and distributed according to the highest bidder. Under this rubric, the privatization of water has grown into an immense industry and threatens communities worldwide. Bottled water, a privatization privilege for the powerful, has become ubiquitous.



WATER is both a sacred gift and a central symbol in all religious traditions. For Christians, it is the initiation ritual, the pouring of clean water, that invites a new person into the beloved community of all life and into the Christian family. It is the sign that gives rise to the reality. Without pure, clean water, there can be no sacrament of Baptism. The Bible abounds with water references, as do the sacred writings of all religions. Perhaps, no other dimension of Earth life has carried such spiritual meaning as water.

WATER is moving front and center across the globe as enlightened and concerned peoples awaken to this crisis. Community groups and governments, international bodies and non-governmental organizations, scientists, ecologists, marine biologists, all are raising alarm signals and moving aggressively to put remedial policies in place. The task is monumental and urgent.

For your consideration: What is happening in regards to water in your own community? How are you and the people with whom you live and work being impacted? What concerns are most pressing locally? What advice would you give to your community, your local leaders, the World Bank, the United Nations in this regard?



Efforts to stop DR-CAFTA point to better future

The passage of the DR-CAFTA bill by both houses of Congress represents a loss for workers, farmers and poor people in the U.S., but especially for those people in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic. All who work for global justice were saddened by the vote. However, the extreme measures that were needed to pass the bill represent a change in the political climate that points to a brighter future. Additionally, the growing collaboration between religious and social organizations on trade issues that developed in the struggle against DR-CAFTA points to a stronger movement for trade justice.

The Bush administration worked harder than ever to pass this bill. Usually trade votes are taken in the House of Representatives first, but seeing little chance of passing there, the administration moved the first vote to the Senate, which is traditionally more pro-free trade, in order to gain momentum before the House vote. The bill passed in the Senate on June 30, but by the smallest margin ever for a free trade bill: 54-45.

The battle in the House proved to be even more difficult. On its merits, the bill was clearly not going to pass, but the administration placed incredible pressures on Republican legislators to change their minds. As Jim Kolbe (R-AZ) put it, the Republican leadership would “twist some Republican arms until they break in a thousand pieces” in order to get votes. The day before the vote, President Bush held an hour long meeting with Republican representatives in which he cut deals and tried to define the DR-CAFTA vote as a security issue, saying that a vote against the bill would increase national security problems in the area.

In the hours before the midnight vote, both Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice were in the House coercing members to vote “yes,” in an unprecedented sign of concern on the part of the administration. At the end of the allotted 15 minute voting period, the bill would have been defeated by a vote of 180 against to 175 in favor, so the Republican leadership extended the vote for almost an hour in order to pressure those who had not voted yet. In the end the vote was 217-215 in favor of the bill. Two Republicans who did not vote both say they would have voted against the bill.

The fact that a bill that will have minimal effect on

the U.S. economy was so difficult to pass shows that future and more significant trade accords like the FTAA and WTO will face almost certain failure as opposition to this trade model grows and legislators are forced to recognize the harmful consequences of the model.

This unity in resistance is the most positive effect of the DR-CAFTA battle. The struggle against the bill brought together more religious organizations than ever before to reflect on and mobilize for trade justice. The Interfaith Statement on Trade and Investment, signed by 56 religious organizations, presents principles which unite diverse faiths and denominations on trade issues.

Various religious organizations mobilized their members to talk with their legislators. The Interfaith Working Group on Trade and Investment (IWG) developed a calendar of daily reflections that tied the more worrisome aspects of DR-CAFTA to Scriptural teachings and sent it to legislators as well as thousands of U.S. residents to help them to look at trade from a

faith perspective. (To see the calendar of reflections and the interfaith statement on trade, go to www.tradejusticeusa.org) A number of Catholic organizations visited Catholic representatives and their aides to bring to their attention the Catholic social teaching on trade and economic justice.

The IWG will work to take advantage of this heightened interest in trade issues as it takes on similar trade accords being negotiated such as the U.S.-South African Customs Union Free Trade Agreement (SACU), which includes Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland; the Andean Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) which encompasses the U.S., Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, and possibly Bolivia; and the World Trade Organization (WTO), which will hold its next ministerial meeting in Hong Kong this December. Wherever there are trade accords being negotiated which benefit transnational corporations at the expense of the dignity of the human person and integrity of creation, they will be met by a growing resistance crying out, as they did at the Congressional prayer breakfast, “We dare to pray...Creator, let the rules be changed, for we long to see trade bring justice to the poor.”



A woman with her child during a CAFTA protest in Guatemala, May 2003.

Latin American TV network launched

As part of a growing movement toward increased Latin American cooperation and integration, four countries launched a continent-wide television network, the New Television of the South, or more commonly, Telesur, on July 24. The network, which initially is available through cable and satellite access, will have programming supplied by various Latin American countries and is designed "to see Latin America with Latin American eyes," according to its vice-president and principal spokesperson, Aram Aharonian, a Uruguayan journalist. "In South America, we know a lot about places like Chechnya, but we don't know our own neighbors." While lauded by many, the initiative has provoked the concern of others who see it as an attempt by Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez to further his influence in the continent which may set off a "war of the airwaves."

Telesur intends to become a strong competitor to CNN and Univisión with 40 percent of its programming being informative, but will "focus on doing the opposite of commercial television ... [W]e will search out the protagonist role of social movements, people, communities, and towns," according to Aharonian. In addition to staff correspondents in Washington D.C., Mexico City, Bogotá, Montevideo, La Paz, Caracas, Havana, Buenos Aires, and Brasilia, the network will be collaborating with independent journalists and media organizations throughout the continent. "We aspire to have our own agenda, touching on themes that quickly disappear off the radar screens of commercial media and that subsequently stops being news. We want to tell the stories from the beginning to the end ...," said Jorge Enrique Botero, one of the network's directors. "We are going to open channels of expression for social movements that do not exist in today's media."

The initiative has been most heavily promoted by the Venezuelan government, which contributed \$2.5 million and holds 51 percent of the shares of the network; Argentina holds a 20 percent share, Cuba 19 percent and Uruguay 10 percent. Brazil, which is launching its own continent-wide channel, TV Brasil, has not given any monetary support, but has provided technical support. At the recent Andean Community summit, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru all expressed interest in promoting exchanges and alliances with Telesur, though none went so far as to pledge any financial support. While initial costs have been backed by governments, the network aims to be funded mostly through private and public sponsors who will not show

consumer commercials, but sponsors' messages like on Public Broadcasting System in the U.S.

The launching of Telesur was met with skepticism by some in the U.S. government, where the House of Representatives passed an amendment on June 20 to budget for money "to carry out broadcasting to Venezuela ... of balanced, objective, and comprehensive television news programming, radio news programming, or both," in order to counter Telesur's "anti-Americanism," in the words of Rep. Connie Mack (R-FL), who sponsored the amendment. But Chavez has already promised to counteract any such measures. If Washington tries to interfere with Venezuela airwaves, "we will take measures to neutralize the attempt, and what we will have is a kind of electronic warfare," warned the Venezuelan leader. If the amendment passes in the Senate and is signed into law, the U.S. will repeat the attempts of Radio and TV Marti, which had similar goals, but which have been blocked by the Cuban government.

Some have compared Telesur to Al Jazeera, the Arabic TV network subsidized by the Qatar government, which has been criticized by U.S. officials for producing inflammatory or biased reporting. Telesur has in fact signed an agreement with Al Jazeera in which that network will expand its coverage of Latin America, opening a central office in Caracas, in exchange for providing coverage of Middle Eastern issues. But there are large differences between the two networks. "First off, it is not managed by the states. The directorate is made up of journalism professionals [only one of which] officially represents a government," said Aharonian. Indeed, the fact that well-regarded journalists from a variety of Latin American countries are already involved in Telesur suggests that it is aiming for international legitimacy, according to James Abello, director of the Foundation for New Ibero-American Journalism in Colombia. And the fact that the network will not be totally dependant on government money guarantees a more independent editorial line.

According to Aharonian, the network is "a strategic project that was born out of the need to give voice to Latin Americans confronted by an accumulation of thoughts and images transmitted by commercial media and out of the urgency to see ourselves through our own eyes and to discover our own solutions to our problems. If we do not start there, the dream of Latin American integration will be no more than a salute to the flag."

Colombia: “Justice and peace” law misnamed

On June 30, after more than 30 months of negotiations between the Colombian government and leaders of the paramilitary forces (the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia - AUC), the Colombian Congress finally passed the “Justice and Peace” law aimed at demobilizing the paramilitary forces and ending the violence perpetrated by them. Instead of ending the inordinate power of these forces, however, many human rights organizations say that the law will only consolidate their power, not provide any significant penalties for gross human rights abusers, nor reconciliation or restitution for the victims of the paramilitaries.

The paramilitary groups began over 20 years ago, aided by the Colombian military, to fight against the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia) and ELN (National Liberation Army) that have dominated much of rural Colombia since the mid-1960s. Since their beginning, the paramilitaries have been involved in drug smuggling to provide their finances, but in recent years, they have become more like organized crime syndicates and less like traditional militias. The top AUC leadership now includes several drug lords with no anti-guerilla history who have purchased paramilitary “franchises” in various areas of the country. Like many organized crime groups, many paramilitaries are becoming involved in politics in order to use public monies. Especially in northern Colombia, they have been able to elect a number of sympathetic officials into all areas of public life: mayors, council people, governors, university presidents, and members of both houses of Congress. Paramilitary leader Salvatore Mancuso boasted that the AUC controls at least 30 percent of the Colombian Congress. Paramilitary supporters are found in many political parties, but there is a new party, Colombia Viva, which has a large number of members who openly support the paramilitaries. This party alone has 13 Congressmembers, 27 mayors and 388 council people.

As a report by the Center for International Policy states, “[t]he mere fact that paramilitary supporters are participating in the democratic process is not necessarily bad news – a measure of success working ‘within the system’ could be an incentive for all armed groups to choose the ballot box over the rifle. The trouble is, just as guerilla groups did in the past with disastrous results, the paramilitaries are choosing both.”

Instead of helping to weaken the AUC, the negotiated demobilization plan, designed to entice paramilitaries to lay down their arms and confess their

crimes in exchange for reduced sentences, may actually result in strengthening them instead due to a number of key failings:

- **Paramilitaries will serve small sentences and not in prisons** – The maximum sentence for demobilized paramilitaries is five to eight years, even if guilty of numerous counts of crimes against humanity. And these sentences can be reduced by one-third for work or study. These sentences will not be served in prisons but in “agricultural colonies” with minimum security.
- **Investigation and prosecution of crimes is restricted** – The government has only 36 hours after a demobilized paramilitary gives a spontaneous declaration to bring formal charges; a team of 20 investigators have only 60 days to complete their investigation. As there will be hundreds of paramilitaries investigated at the same time, it is clear that the investigators will not be able to go into any depth under those conditions.
- **Paramilitaries not required to confess all crimes** – The incentive for the paramilitaries is to confess to a minimum of crimes in the hopes that the overwhelmed investigators are not able to find proof of other crimes. Even if they are found to have committed other crimes, if the paramilitaries “accept the charges,” the judge can only increase their sentence by 20 percent.
- **Demobilization will not decrease power of paramilitary organizations** – Perhaps most troubling about the law is the fact that it does not force the paramilitaries receiving reduced sentences to divulge information to dismantle the paramilitary organizations, a necessary requirement for any beneficial demobilization plan. The law states that to receive reduced penalties, the demobilizing paramilitary must “deliver information or collaborate with the dismantling of the group to which he belonged” and that “the assets resulting from illegal activity must be turned over,” but if s/he is later found to have withheld information or assets or even lied about the group’s structure and financial backing, his/her sentence will not change, so the incentive is, once again, to tell the minimum possible and hope that the investigators don’t find more.
- **Guilty paramilitaries would not be extradited and could still run for public office** – The law defines membership in a paramilitary group as “sedition,” a political crime for which extradition is unconstitutional and for which defendants cannot be barred from holding public office. The law does not explicitly bar extradition of paramilitaries for other crimes, but if they confess to a crime for which they could be

extradited and then serve their reduced sentence, they would be able to plea double jeopardy (being tried twice for the same offense) in order to avoid extradition to the U.S. where they would face much more severe sentences. Avoiding extradition was one of the primary goals of the paramilitaries during the negotiating process and some “pure” drug traffickers have joined demobilizing paramilitary groups for the sole purpose of receiving these sentencing benefits.

- **Lack of participation by victims** – The law does not allow victims of the paramilitaries to challenge their confessions and limits their participation to the reparations phase. As the incentive is to underreport assets stolen, there will not be much for the victims to receive in terms of reparations. There is also nothing in the law to try to bring about reconciliation between the paramilitaries and their victims.

The law will leave the paramilitaries criminal networks, financing streams and assets intact, so the

paramilitary groups will be able to continue on through the recruitment of new soldiers by continuing to offer high salaries and benefits. As one demobilized paramilitary said, “The demobilization... is a farce. It’s a way of quieting down the system and returning again, starting over from another side.” In the end, the Justice and Peace law will most likely provide neither of these things.

Some background resources on Colombia’s paramilitary groups:

- **Smoke and Mirrors: Colombia’s demobilization of paramilitary groups**, Human Rights Watch, August 2005, Vol. 17, No. 3(B).
- **Peace – or “Paramilitarization?”: Why a weak peace agreement with Colombian paramilitary groups may be worse than no agreement at all**, Center for International Policy, July 2005.
- **Colombia: Justice and Peace Law will guarantee impunity for human rights abusers**, Amnesty International, News Service 106, April 26, 2005.

“Cuban Five” convictions vacated

A three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta, Georgia, vacated the 1998 conviction of five Cubans charged with serving as unregistered agents of a foreign government, in effect, espionage. The judges have been mulling the conviction since hearing the appeal in March 2004. Their decision to reverse the lower court was unanimous. The following article is excerpted from a longer piece in NotiCen (8/11/05).

The defendants, Gerardo Hernandez, Rene Gonzalez, Ramon Labanino, Antonio Guerrero, and Fernando Gonzalez, will very likely now be tried anew, but not in Miami, where the judges determined they did not get a fair trial the first time around. Hernandez had been given a double life sentence plus 15 years, Rene Gonzalez 15 years, Labanino life plus 18 years, Guerrero life plus 10 years, Fernando Gonzalez 19 years.

In the 93-page decision, the judges wrote, “The entire community is sensitive to and permeated by concerns for the Cuban exile population in Miami. A new trial was mandated by the perfect storm created when the surge of pervasive community sentiment and extensive publicity both before and during the trial merged with the improper prosecutorial references.”

Hernandez’s case is particularly important because he had been charged with conspiracy to commit murder in connection with the 1996 shoot-down by the Cuban

military of Hermanos al Rescate planes flying leafletting sorties over the island in violation of Cuban airspace.

In Cuba the court’s decision was received enthusiastically. On the island, the men are regarded as heroes whose work was to monitor the threat from Miami-based terrorists intent on overthrowing Cuba’s government, political system, and way of life.

The Cuban government has been waging an intense campaign for the five. The court took the conduct of the original trial to task for failing to acknowledge the depth of prejudice against the defendants in the Miami area and for a variety of improprieties on the part of the prosecution in fanning those flames.

Only in its conclusion did the decision soften in its finding that Miami citizens could not have rendered a just verdict. It said, “The court is cognizant that its judgment today will be received by those citizens with grave disappointment, but it is equally confident of our shared commitment to scrupulously protect our freedoms. ... Included in [U.S. American] values are the rights of the accused criminal that insure a fair trial. Thus, in the final analysis, we trust that any disappointment with our judgment in this case will be tempered and balanced by the recognition that we are a nation of laws in which every defendant, no matter how popular, must be treated fairly. Our Constitution requires no less.”

Guatemala: Mixed signals on response to gangs

At least 35 members of international youth gangs died and dozens more were injured on August 15 when violence erupted simultaneously in several of Guatemala's prisons. Hundreds have died recently or been seriously injured in similar outbreaks in penitentiaries in Honduras, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic. In each of these countries, prison authorities have been accused of encouraging gang-on-gang extermination by locking rival gangs up together without effective supervision or separation. Weapons used by inmates in Guatemala included guns, hand grenades, knives and an array of improvised items – clear evidence, according to NotiCen (8/18/05), of official failure to police inmates or even of official complicity in setting the stage for the riots. Interviews with gang members revealed that they routinely paid prison guards to provide them with weapons.

The deaths come just a month after President Oscar Berger recommended at a meeting of the region's presidents that combined military force be unleashed against the gangs and after (in apparent contradiction) the Guatemalan presidential commission on human rights (COPREDEH) announced that Guatemala would take a different tack from its neighbors in the regional effort to control gang violence. The proposal for a combined military force drew significant criticism from those fearful that it would become a repressive rather than a preventive force.

Frank LaRue, president of COPREDEH, said that Guatemala would attack the problem at its social, economic, and educational roots after witnessing the results of the super *mano dura* policies in El Salvador and Honduras. *Mano dura* policies assume and exagger-

ate links between gangs, terrorism, narcotrafficking and other violent criminal activity.

Guatemala's alternate direction is supposedly based on a different analysis of the gangs. Emilio Goubaud, director of the Alianza para la Prevencion del Delito (APREDE) has said that gang members are born, grow, and develop in poverty and filth. They concentrate their activities on robbery, burglary, and murder, sometimes acting as hit men for organized crime. They start their careers between the ages of eight and 12 years, seeking security and relevance in their lives. They are frequently victims themselves of family violence and sexual abuse. The gangs offer strict rules and violence as a disciplinary measure, which new recruits find more appealing than the chaos of their everyday lives.

As many as 125,000 gang-affiliated youths live in Guatemala; most are members of Mara 18 or Mara Salvatrucha. Both of these organizations originated in the U.S.: Mara 18 in Chicago in 1952, and Salvatrucha in Los Angeles in the 1980s.

Internationally, the gangs have become the repository of blame for most of the region's crime problems. But Goubaud suggests that in Guatemala, blaming the gangs hides the role played by private security forces in organized crime. "Guatemala has 20,000 officers in the Policia Nacional Civil (PNC) while the private sector has 120,000 security agents. The owners of the private security agencies are linked to organized crime. The gangs serve as facades, blamed for everything," he said. Human rights groups back this view; both they and the gangs charge that the PNC engages in social cleansing, and have killed dozens of gang members this year.

The government has now endorsed the views of

Goubaud and APREDE to the extent that it has drawn up a plan called the Politica Nacional de Prevencion de la Violencia Juvenil (PNPVJ). COPREDEH's LaRue said the proposal "... is part of an integrated focus that, through nine policies of prevention will allow us, in a coordinated manner, to attack the causes that bring young Guatemalans of both sexes to choose the street as a way of life."

The nine policies are:

1. Promotion of a new

Honduras: Thanks needed

On August 15, 2005, 10 members of the U.S. House of Representatives sent a letter to Honduran President Ricardo Maduro. In it they called for a comprehensive response to youth gang violence that includes effective prevention and rehabilitation programs and involves communities and community institutions. They also urged a prompt, thorough and transparent investigation into the *El Presidio* prison fire that killed 106 youth in San Pedro Sula in May 2004 (see *NewsNotes*, July-August 2004 and June-July 2005). If your Congressional representative signed the letter, please write a letter of thanks. Those who signed are: Rosa DeLauro (CT), Jose Serrano (NY), James McGovern (MA), Robert Wexler (FL), Dennis Kucinich (OH), Raul Grijalva (AZ), James Oberstar (MN), Madeleine Bordallo (Guam), Donald Payne (NJ) and Barbara Lee (CA).

civic conscience that incorporates a new scale of civic, cultural, religious, and human values based on self-esteem, respect for others, and for society.

2. Guarantees access for adolescents and youths to jobs through technical training leading to productive lives. For this to happen, COPREDEH is pressing for strengthening the educational system, and educational opportunities outside the schools to bring young people to competitiveness in the job market in a short time.

3. Providing productive leisure time activities utilizing resources of municipalities, the ministries of education, culture, and sports, and the Confederacion Deportiva Autonoma de Guatemala.

4. Creation of infrastructure, and use of existing facilities for these purposes.

5. Sensitizing municipalities, government departments, the PNC, the judicial authorities, the Ministerio Publico, and the Defensa Publica Penal to develop a new and more positive relationship with young people.

6. Working with the media and public opinion in general toward a new view of youth. This will include efforts to get the media not to overplay youth related



Maryknoll Father Tom Goekler (center, white cap) ministers to young people in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, who are either current or former gang members. Photo by Marybeth Christie, courtesy of Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers.

violence, avoid degrading representations of children and adolescents, and avoid stigmatization of young people with tattoos, long hair, or distinctive clothing as gangsters.

7. Working to eradicate intra-family violence that forces the young into the streets.

8. Encouraging communication and cooperation between government agencies, municipalities, local security committees, and Consejos Municipales de

Desarrollo to gain their active participation in these efforts.

9. Lobbying the legislature for legislation to formulate laws consistent with international agreements ratified by Guatemala on protection of children, adolescents, and youth. This would include increasing criminal penalties for violations of the security, dignity, and integrity of young people, and to add laws against sexual assaults, child pornography and prostitution, and other offenses that target the young.

The preceeding report is largely from NotiCen (6/30/05).

El Salvador: Nueva Generacion XXI Youth Movement

Nueva Generacion XXI Youth Movement, a positive program in San Salvador developed by and for young people at risk, was robbed on Tuesday July 12, 2005 of two recently donated, new computers, a CD burner, a computer modem, a printer/fax/copier and computer speakers. A youth member of the administrative staff was threatened. NGXXI suffered two robberies earlier this year, losing a printer, two CD players, a scanner, DVD player, and VCR. Because of this, NGXXI moved its location, renting a house that was much more secure. NGXXI was told by the police that no significant investigation is likely.

The youth of NGXXI energetically denounced the robberies and reiterated their commitment to working for social justice and a better world for youth and humanity. They asked for "support of friends, organizations and civil society in general ... to be in touch and support our initiatives that we as youth are creating." They added, "If you can support us [by replacing the] office equipment that has been stolen or with financial donations to buy what has been lost, we thank you now for your contribution."

Faith in action:

To see how you can help, go to <http://ngxxi.loyola.edu> (website in Spanish; at press time, its English version was still in production) or send an email to nuevageneracion21@hotmail.com.

Haiti: Elections scheduled; instability, fear continue

In the context of rampant violence and widespread fear, an intensely polarized political reality, a dysfunctional justice system and rumor or opinion filling in for accurate information – none of which is new – Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) has postponed local elections scheduled for October 9 until after legislative and presidential elections, now set for November 6. A runoff presidential election, should it be necessary, will be held on December 11. The interim government, considered by some sectors to be completely illegitimate, and by others to be a flawed step toward reinstatement of the rule of law, will hand over power on February 7, a date which coincides with the official end of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's term.

The CEP has extended the registration deadline to September 15, hoping to get a turnout sufficient to legitimize the exercise. So far the number registered stands at 1.5 million, approximately 25 percent of the electorate.

Concerns remain about the ability of those living in rural areas to register as they have to walk much further or pay to reach the registration centers by bus. And even in Port au Prince, according to the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR), the location of the registration centers appeared to favor the wealthier urban voter and potential government supporters.

Recently, Yvon Feuille, Louis Gerald Gilles, and Rudy Heriveaux, part of the moderate wing of Fanmi Lavalas (Aristide's party), notified the CEP that the party would participate in the elections. That was, however, almost immediately denied by others in the party and it is not yet clear whether and to what extent all or some sectors of Fanmi Lavalas will participate. Lavalas has been refusing to participate until a series of demands are met: freedom for all political prisoners; attacks against its activists curbed; and an end to indiscriminate shooting by police at demonstrations and political gatherings.

Many Lavalas members have been jailed, most notably former prime minister Yvon Neptune, Catholic priest Gerard Jean-Juste, a potential presidential candidate and Aristide supporter, and former interior minister Jocelerme Privert. All three are imprisoned in connection with murders, but none has been charged. Privert and Neptune have been in prison for many months. Jean-Juste was arrested in mid July "for his own protection" after he was attacked at the funeral of well-known journalist Jacques Roche. Roche was killed three days

after being abducted by unknown assailants. The vicious attack on Jean-Juste was apparently a reaction to his remarks considered inflammatory by some supporters of Roche.

The desperate need for all parties to clearly distance themselves from the street-level violence that is especially devastating to the most impoverished communities was painfully evident to a delegation of Pax Christi International that visited Haiti in late July. Equally evident was the failure of the Haitian and international communities to address the structural violence of social and economic injustice that is perpetuating the misery of Haiti's majority.

The UN Security Council has extended the mandate of the UN Stabilization and Peace Keeping Force (MINUSTAH) until February 2006. An additional 1,000 military personnel and 275 UN civilian police officers will be deployed.

MINUSTAH has been beset by problems since it took over in July 2004. Its mandate includes providing a secure and stable environment, particularly through disarmament; supporting the political process and good governance in preparation for upcoming elections; and monitoring and reporting on human rights. It has thus far failed to control the violence that has gripped the country, particularly in the densely populated slum areas of Port-au-Prince like Cite Soleil. Daily shootings, extortion and protection rackets by rival factions have made it impossible for ordinary citizens to go about their daily lives with any sense of safety. According to CIIR, 450 people have been kidnapped since March.

In fact, MINUSTAH has been accused of contributing to the violence rather than quelling it. A massive MINUSTAH military action in early July, which was aimed at accused gang leader Dred Wilme and his supporters in Cite Soleil, caused an unknown number of deaths, either directly, during crossfire in a heavily populated neighborhood, or by gangs retaliating against people assumed to be "informers."

For additional information, see NotiCen (8/11/05) or go to www.ciir.org; www.paxchristiusa.org; or www.paxchristi.net.

Faith in action:

Write to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, asking for an official investigation into MINUSTAH operations, particularly in Cite Soleil on July 6. The postal address is UN Headquarters, New York, NY 10017; Annan's email address is sg@un.org.

U.S., China oil dependence: Less is more

China's expanding industry – and its growing demand for oil – calls for closer U.S.-Chinese cooperation. The Friends Committee on National Legislation (<http://www.fcnl.org/>) explores related issues in its July/August Washington Newsletter on which the following article is based.

During this year, the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the West should remember that Japan's military adventures in the 1930s and 1940s were largely driven by its need for oil. By 1940 Japan imported more than 90 percent of its oil needs, and its invasion of the South Pacific was an effort to seize oil reserves in the Dutch East Indies.

In many respects, China stands today where Japan stood 70 years ago – a rapidly rising Asian power with surging demand for imported oil and other natural resources. In 2003 China surpassed Japan to become the second largest consumer of oil after the U.S. By 2025 oil demand in China is expected to double, and it will have to import 75 percent of its needs. The U.S. will have to import an estimated 70 percent of its oil needs, compared with 60 percent at present.

Meanwhile, China and the U.S. are becoming more economically interdependent. U.S. demand for inexpensive Chinese goods provides jobs for millions of workers. China uses the dollars earned from trade with the U.S. to buy oil and other commodities on the global market. U.S.-based firms have invested billions of dollars in China's economy, providing jobs and raising living standards.

At the same time, China's inexpensive goods help to keep the U.S. cost of living down, leaving U.S. consumers with more discretionary income. In turn, Chinese demand for U.S. goods and services creates opportunities for U.S. business and jobs for U.S. workers. China invests its mounting dollar reserves in U.S. Treasury bonds, which helps keep U.S. interest rates low and the U.S. economy growing.

Competition is heating up for global oil resources, however. The U.S., with less than five percent of the world's population, consumes about a quarter of global oil production. China, with 22 percent of the world's population, consumes only about eight percent. But if current trends continue, China is expected to surpass the U.S. in oil consumption within a few decades.

Cars already consume one third of China's oil. With 10 million private vehicles on the road, China is the

third largest car market after the U.S. and Japan.

Growing U.S. and Chinese oil dependence has put our two countries on a collision course. What if China develops and deploys the capacity to militarily defend its foreign oil reserves, pipelines and sea lanes? What if China starts intervening in the internal affairs of oil-rich developing countries to preserve its oil interests?

However, there is no need for a conflict over oil if both countries recognize the need to reduce their oil dependence. Affordable technologies exist that could dramatically reduce the dependence on oil of both economies, and emerging technologies on the horizon hold promise of even greater reductions. U.S.-China cooperation to reduce oil dependence could boost the security of both nations.

Some aspects of bipartisan legislation recently introduced in the U.S. Senate could help promote peaceful coexistence – the United States-People's Republic of China Cultural Engagement Act. The bill would invest in expanding U.S. elementary- through university-level Chinese language and cultural education programs, and support academic and scientific exchange. However, great care must be taken to ensure that economic and trade relations between the U.S. and China are just.

The U.S. must dramatically reduce its oil use – the world can neither afford continued wasteful and excessive U.S. per capita consumption of oil nor a China that follows the U.S. model of an oil- and car-dependent economy. China will likely become a competitive superpower within a few decades, challenging U.S. global dominance, and both sides are nuclear armed. Learning to live constructively with our growing interdependence could chart a path toward long-term peaceful coexistence, cooperation on challenges of mutual concern, and prospects of human betterment for all involved.

Faith in action:

Write to your U.S. senators and ask them to support closer scientific, cultural and just economic ties that could help boost mutual U.S.-China understanding and help both nations secure a future free of war.

For resources on working for environmental justice through a faith perspective, contact the Interfaith Climate Change Network, www.protectingcreation.org/, National Council of the Churches of Christ, 110 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Suite 108, Washington, D.C. 20002; 202-544-2350, ext. 27; ecojustice@nccusa.org

Cambodia: Illegal logging lays waste to country

Much of Cambodia's population of 13.6 million faces a mean existence, with 80 percent living in rural areas and 40 percent earning less than 50 cents per day. Many farmers and fishermen are being pushed still further into poverty as illegal logging aggravates both flooding and drought, threatening their very means of survival.

In 1970 an estimated three-quarters of Cambodia was forested. About half of that cover has been cleared through unsustainable logging, most of it in the past 10 years. In 2000 Cambodia suffered its worst flooding in 70 years. The floods, which the UN blamed on deforestation, claimed 350 lives and displaced hundreds of thousands. The government estimated the floods cost the country more than \$156 million – in contrast to the \$92 million in timber royalties it had collected over the previous six years.

Global Witness, a British environmental NGO, reported in 1997 that Cambodia's forests were already "at a crisis point with illegal logging escalating at an alarming rate. Legal concessionaires are illegally cutting both inside and outside of the country; timber is flowing into Vietnam and is being exported by sea; and vast revenues are being diverted into a parallel budget."

Even national parks and forest land are not safe from loggers. The timber company Green Elite began cutting last year in Cambodia's Botum Sakor National Park, armed with a concession contract signed by Prime Minister Hun Sen in 1998. The contract bypassed a logging moratorium the prime minister declared in 2002 because it designated the effort as an "agro-industrial" project.

Green Elite reportedly has ties with Asia Pulp & Paper (APP), the world's tenth largest paper producer. APP says it is committed to establishing sustainable eucalyptus and acacia plantations in Cambodia to help feed its mills in China, India and Indonesia. However, Glen Barry of Forests.org, a U.S. conservation organization that tracks forestry developments in Cambodia, says, "Plantations are not forests. There is no biodiversity, and you lose all the other services that are provided by natural forests."

Deforestation produces massive ecological damage, including erosion and the siltation of rivers and lakes. The silt nurtures plant life and, as oxygen decreases, fish stocks decline. This trend could have serious

consequences in Cambodia, where fish is the main source of protein. Shallower lakes and rivers, meanwhile, flood more quickly in heavy rains, but they also evaporate more quickly during the dry season, leaving farmers short of water.

A recent report of the United States Agency for International Development, "Cambodian Corruption Assessment," concluded that widespread bribery will make it difficult to slow deforestation in Cambodia. "Forestry and mining concessions are signed behind closed doors," according to the report. "...(N)o one outside the system knows what proportion of earnings go to pay taxes, what proportion go to international businesses as excessive profits, and what proportion are transferred to foreign bank accounts."

The experience of Global Witness indicates the difficulty of trying to save Cambodia's forests. The NGO released its report "Taking a Cut – Institutionalised Corruption and Illegal Logging in Cambodia's Aural Wildlife Sanctuary" last November. The document reported in detail where illegal logging is taking place, how the loggers operate and how payoffs are made to corrupt officials.

"In one instance we discovered an official register of illegal operators, including details of their equipment and their home addresses, but rather than using this for enforcement purposes it is being used as the basis for extortion," says Global Witness' Jon Buckrell.

"Back in Phnom Penh it seems the only senior officers, officials and politicians that don't have their fingers in the pie are sitting on their hands doing nothing. The same applies to the donor community," Buckrell adds.

Seven months after "Taking a Cut" was published, five Global Witness staff members were banned from Cambodia at the instigation of the prime minister.

Faith in action:

Write to His Excellency Ambassador Sereywath Ek, Royal Embassy of Cambodia, 4530 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20011 (fax 202-726-8381). Urge that Prime Minister Hun Sen stop illegal logging in Cambodia to preserve the country's precious patrimony. Ask that Global Witness staff be readmitted to the country. Recommend close oversight of legitimate logging in order to protect Cambodia's citizens, especially farmers and fishermen.



Thailand: Human rights position challenged

Thailand has told the UN Human Rights Committee that its laws are consistent with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but some human rights groups question how far the kingdom has actually implemented the accord.

A Thai delegation met with members of the human rights committee in July in Geneva to discuss Thailand's report on implementation of the covenant, which recognizes universal rights including life, liberty and security as well as freedoms of speech, religion and movement.

The delegation told the committee that the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) had received 2,148 complaints between July 2001 and May 2005. It said 1,309 complaints had already been investigated, and another 559 were under examination.

The Human Rights Committee raised a number of issues, including the state of emergency declared in three southern provinces and the risk it could pose to fundamental rights, the problem of stateless persons, and alleged discrimination against minorities.

The Thai delegation said military personnel had been empowered under the 1914 Martial Law Act to deal with unrest in Thailand's southern provinces because local police could not control the situation. However, it assured the committee that people's fundamental rights had not been affected.

The committee inquired about the human rights of displaced persons and refugees, especially from neighboring Burma (Myanmar), and of illegal immigrants in Thailand. The delegation said the kingdom encourages voluntary repatriation of displaced persons. The committee also expressed concern over the process of registering and granting citizenship to immigrants and their children. The delegation said children of migrant workers who are registered can become Thai citizens.

In response to queries about minority rights in Thailand, the delegation said members of hill tribes who were not counted in the national census may petition the government for citizenship. The delegation also said that, while the movement of persons lacking Thai nationality or legal migrant status is restricted, their children enjoy freedom of movement and access to education under a cabinet policy adopted on July 5, 2005.

The committee expressed grave concern over nearly 2,600 extrajudicial killings during Thailand's war on drugs. The delegation said 750 arrests had been made in its investigations so far, and authorities were seeking

another 117 suspects in the killings.

The committee also questioned the security of human rights defenders and organizations in Thailand, citing two well-known cases. Environmentalist and community leader Charoen Wat-Aksorn was murdered in June 2004. Human rights lawyer Somchai Neelapaijit disappeared in March 2004, and his whereabouts remain unknown. The Thai delegation said five suspects have been arrested in the first case, and four police officers in the second.

Several human rights groups monitoring events in Thailand have published critiques on related issues.

Human Rights First said at least 18 human rights defenders have been killed or disappeared in Thailand in recent years. Many were environmental activists who had challenged businesses, officials or other local power-holders. The organization said that, in cases where police made arrests, those arrested were allegedly the gunmen rather than the masterminds of the killings.

Human Rights First, with offices in New York and Washington, D.C., said Thailand's written report to the UN Human Rights Committee failed to mention either Charoen Wat-Aksorn or Somchai Neelapaijit. It also said the report "reveals an alarmingly low prosecution rate of under three percent" of extrajudicial killings.

The Hong Kong-based Asian Legal Resource Center (ALRC) criticized the government for failing to adequately investigate the deaths of 78 demonstrators in southern Thailand. The men suffocated after they were piled three deep on military trucks and driven away for questioning (see "Thailand: Human rights groups seek end to violence" in *NewsNotes*, July/August 2005). The ALRC said two government inquiries were "politically appointed" and served "primarily to deflect public and international criticism, rather than to reach conclusions ... for the protection of human rights in Thailand."

The ALRC also said the Thailand delegation had overstated the investigative power of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). "(S)tate agencies have consistently ignored the recommendations of the NHRC, knowing that it has no power," the ALRC said. "...(T)he largest numbers of complaints that the NHRC receives are about police, of which some 19 percent are about torture. However, having received the complaints, the NHRC cannot investigate the cases without the cooperation of the police: as the police are also the alleged perpetrators, the matter ends there."

The Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) described the difficulty that indigenous hill tribes encoun-

ter in seeking to become Thai citizens. Citing the Highland Peoples Task Force, the ACHR said nearly 378,000 persons were without any legal status in Thailand in August 2004. Despite the census and hill tribe surveys, the ACHR said the process of granting citizenship has been marred by discrimination, corruption and a lack of judicial oversight. The ACHR also said members of hill tribes are issued identity cards of different colors that correspond to varying degrees of restriction of freedom of movement. The group called for measures including expeditious processing of applications for citizenship,

and lifting all restrictions on the freedom of movement.

Amnesty International (AI) reported in October 2004 that Thailand had made progress on human rights issues in the previous 12 years. However, AI expressed ongoing concern about violence and martial law in southern Thailand, lack of protection for human rights defenders, conduct of the anti-drug war in 2003, and denial of rights to refugees. "The impunity enjoyed by the security forces has in effect meant that these violations go unpunished," AI said, "which contributes to their continued occurrence."

Japan: New textbook downplays WWII aggression

Local education boards in Japan were deciding this summer whether to adopt a new history textbook revising – critics say whitewashing – descriptions of Japanese aggression during World War II.

The New History Textbook for junior high school is the work of the Japanese Society for Textbook Reform. The Society was organized in 1997 by scholars who wanted to delete passages such as those mentioning "comfort women" from textbooks then in use. The book made its debut in 2001, and a revised edition was approved earlier this year for use throughout Japan. However, the final choice of textbooks is left to the discretion of local education boards.

Critics say the 2005 edition does include several revisions of the 2001 text. For example, it deletes a statement that Japan's annexation of the Korean Peninsula was "accepted by some people in Korea." However, a coalition of 15 Japanese civic groups says the book's approach remains essentially unchanged. They say, for example, that it avoids the word "invasion." It says instead that Japan brought other Asian countries under its rule "in order to secure resources." The term "comfort women" does not appear, and no statistics are used for the 1937 Nanjing Massacre in China, in which historians estimate 150,000-300,000 died.

At a news conference in Tokyo, concerned citizens' groups said distortions in the textbook reflected a current rise in Japanese nationalism. They said this nationalistic spirit was also characterized by the government's encouragement to sing the Kimigayo, the national anthem, and to raise the Honomaru, the national flag; by Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni Shrine dedicated to Japan's war dead, including 1,068 convicted war criminals; and by discrimina-

tion against migrants and foreign residents.

Adoption of the textbook in April by the Education Ministry fueled anti-Japanese feelings in the region. It sparked protests in both China and South Korea, where bitter memories of Japanese aggression persist. Nonetheless, the publisher hoped the new text would be adopted by 10 percent of Japan's school districts. The 2001 edition was used in fewer than one percent. The country's nearly 600 education boards were to make their decisions by Aug. 31.

In a message to mark the 60th anniversary this year of the end of World War II, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan encouraged all people of good will to reflect on Japan's recent history and to protect the country's peace constitution, taking "a firm stand on this issue in order to regain the trust of the people of East Asia and together with them work for peace."

"We Japanese are being called to honestly accept our history, a history which includes the violent invasion and colonisation of other countries, reflect on it and share the historic recognition among ourselves," the bishops wrote. "We believe that to do this will be to promise not to repeat the tragedy and also to commit oneself to the future."

In August, Tokyo's Sugunami ward adopted the new history text. Yoshio Notomi, the ward's education chief, said that, once textbooks pass national inspection, "[W]e believe our task is to nurture children's ability by using them."

But it's difficult to reflect clearly on history using a textbook that, in the words of one civic group (Children and Textbooks Japan Network 21), "distorts history, justifies and glorifies Japan's war of aggression" and hardly mentions the damage Japan caused during the war.

Philippines: Baguio signs disputed water pact

The Benguet Corp. in the Philippines says it has signed an agreement to provide Baguio City with 50,000 cubic meters of treated water per day. Benguet said it hopes to begin implementing the Bulk Water Supply Project (BWSP) in Baguio, 150 miles north of Manila, by the fourth quarter of 2005.

The 25-year contract, renewable for another 25 years, was signed with the Baguio Water District (BWD). Benguet says it eventually hopes to develop water resources in the area sufficient to serve the towns of La Trinidad, Itogon, Sablan and Tuba, in addition to Baguio. Benguet holds 65 permits from the National Water Resources Board to tap surface water, spring water and ground-water sources.

Baguio has faced a growing water shortage since the latter half of the 1980s, when the city's watersheds were denuded. In the 1990s the BWD tried to access water sources in adjoining Tuba to meet the demand, but the water district met resistance from Tuba municipal officials. In 1997 and again in 2003, Baguio invited the private sector to bid on the BWSP in an effort to address the problem. The bid from Benguet – whose interests also include mining, forestry and real estate development – was approved on August 16, 2005.

The Baguio Water District currently provides municipal water to only about two-thirds of the city's population. Nonetheless, the daily water demand increases from 30,000 cubic meters per workday to 80,000 on weekends. The popular tourist destination has a population of some 300,000, which can triple during popular festivals.

In its bid proposal Benguet said it would draw water from a proposed seven million cubic meter reservoir seven kilometers from Baguio City. Benguet also said it would construct a water treatment plant near the reservoir and would develop the surrounding area into a protected watershed.

However, local residents have expressed misgivings over the involvement of private industry in providing municipal water. Metro-Baguio Pro-Consumers predicts that, with Benguet's involvement, consumer water

prices could double. The group also says the BWD and the University of the Philippines have detected excessive levels of lead, cadmium, manganese and mercury in Benguet's main water source and proposed reservoir. It also says the Water District's current distribution system is inadequate, and without rehabilitation Benguet could probably not provide water to all of the targeted households.

The citizens' group Cordillera People's Alliance (www.cpaphils.org/) says local communities have frequently resisted Benguet proposals since the corporation first established itself in Itogon over 100 years ago. From 1989 to 1994 Itogon communities resisted plans of Benguet Gold Operations for opencast or underground bulk mining operations, holding barricades for as long as three years. Ultimately Benguet dug an open pit gold mine at Antamok, but it was abandoned in 1999 when it proved unprofitable. The open pit is now Benguet's proposed site for a water reservoir under its contract with the BWD.

On August 4, Metro-Baguio Pro-Consumers objected to the Water District's reconsideration of Benguet's proposal after it had deferred approval in May. "Until now," the citizens group said, "questions of quality and affordability of water, endorsement of source community, privatization, irregularities in the bidding and preparedness of BWD's system remain unsettled." For many local residents those same questions about the BWSP remain unanswered even though Benguet has won the Water District's approval.

Faith in action:

Write to H.E. Ambassador Albert F. del Rosario, Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines, 1600 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 (fax 202-467-9417). Ask that the government recognize access to water as a human right, and that it protect against privatization of water and inordinate rate hikes. Ask for preferential treatment for indigenous communities and for the poor and marginalized. Urge a policy of public control of the water infrastructure vs. private corporate interests. Appeal for consultation with affected communities and for citizen participation in decision-making processes.



Baguio consumers sign a petition urging the Baguio Water District to consider its decision awarding the Benguet Corporation the bulk water project. #Photo Credit: Joel Capulong/NORDIS Photo

Kenya: Debate over new constitution heats up

The government of President Mwai Kibaki came to power on a campaign promise that it would make the new constitution a cornerstone of its rule. The draft constitution has become a symbol of the hopes and aspirations of Kenyans for a participatory democracy. The following is based on two InterPress Service articles by Joyce Mulama and on the Human Rights Watch World Report 2005.

According to Human Rights Watch, the version agreed on last year by the National Constitutional Conference - popularly referred to as the Bomas draft - contains "a strong non-derogable bill of rights, separation and devolution of powers, and a weaker presidency through the creation of a prime minister position. Although a product of consensus and political compromise, it is the most widely consultative rights document that Kenya has ever seen and contains better human rights guarantees than the current constitution ... [but] twice the government has publicly announced deadlines by which the constitution would be passed; both times it has failed to deliver."

On July 21, 2005 parliament gave its approval to

an amended draft of the constitution by a vote of 102 to 61. The altered version of the document was initially put forward during a retreat attended by some legislators in the coastal town of Kilifi.

The Kilifi draft allows for a powerful head of state and a prime minister with little authority. It replaces the Bomas draft, which transferred much of the power currently vested in the presidency to a newly-created post of prime minister.

The Bomas draft was initially formulated by the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission, appointed in 2000 to gauge the views of Kenyans about what they wished to see incorporated in their new constitution. This document was intended to update the constitution drawn up at independence from Britain in 1963.

One of the findings of the commission, which traveled throughout the country, was that citizens wanted restrictions on the executive — apparently in reaction to the abuse of presidential powers under former heads of state Daniel arap Moi and Jomo Kenyatta.

The decision to tamper with the Bomas draft is reportedly motivated by a power struggle between the two main wings of the ruling National Rainbow Coalition (NARC): the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), led by Raila Odinga - and the National Alliance Party of Kenya, which supports President Kibaki.

Parliament's decision to pass the amended draft came after two days of heated debate, and violent demonstrations in Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu. One person was killed and several others were injured in running battles between protesters and police. In addition, more than 20 people were detained, including senior officials of civil society groups. The protesters had intended to march on parliament, in an effort to persuade legislators to reject amendments to the Bomas draft.

Legislators passed the Kilifi draft under the terms of the Consensus Act, which was introduced last year despite public protest and gives parliament the right to amend sections of the Bomas draft. Initially, parliamentarians were required to accept or reject the Bomas draft in its entirety.

Civil society groups and individual activists have filed several court cases challenging the actions of parliament.

Should the constitution be given the green light in the referendum, which will take place in November, it is expected to enter into force by December.



Sudan: Garang's death and the peace process

John Garang, Sudan's newly sworn-in First Vice-President, was killed in a helicopter crash near Uganda's border with Sudan on Saturday, July 30. Garang, as leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) for 22 years, was central to negotiations with the government of Sudan that led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed on January 9, 2005.

Despite assurances from Sudan's President Umar el-Bashir and from Garang's chief of staff, Commander Salva Kiir Mayardit, who was later named as his successor, that they would work to continue to implement the peace agreement, violence erupted in Khartoum, in the southern city of Juba and elsewhere after news of Garang's death. At least 130 people were killed; hundreds more were injured.

Garang's wife, Rebecca, appealed for an end to the violence, saying, "If they loved him, they should remain calm and carry on with his vision. It is John Garang who is dead. The vision should be kept alive."

Garang was buried overlooking the lush green Jebel Kuyu mountains, in an emotional ceremony in which hundreds of volunteers carried bricks, shoveled sand and mixed cement under the supervision of SPLM/A architects who designed the mausoleum.

Speaking at Juba cathedral, Archbishop Joseph Marona compared Garang to several biblical prophets, particularly Moses, for "leading the people of Sudan towards peace and stability." Similar tributes and expressions of sympathy were sent from religious and political leaders in Africa and around the world.

Meanwhile, Doctors Without Borders (Médecins sans Frontières - MSF) reports continued violence against civilians in Darfur. From January to May 2005, MSF teams treated more than 500 people for violence-related injuries and 278 women for rape. The violence has not abated since. On July 24, in Shangil Tobaya, North Darfur State, MSF said it witnessed an attack on an internally displaced persons' (IDPs) camp next to the organization's clinic. Grenades were used in the attack, and shelters in the camp were burnt down, forcing hundreds of IDPs to once again flee for their lives. MSF said it had treated 14 people - including four children - for bullet and shrapnel wounds.

On June 9, the agency said it had examined and treated 15 women who had been attacked the previous day in Korma, North Darfur. It found that five of them had been raped, one of whom was aged just 15, while

another was three months pregnant.

The war in Darfur pits Sudanese government troops and militias - allegedly allied to the government - against rebels, mainly from the Sudan Liberation Army and the Justice and Equality Movement, who are fighting to end what they say is the marginalization of and discrimination against the region's inhabitants by the state.

The UN estimates that since the start of the conflict in February 2003, over a third of the total population - more than 2.5 million people, including nearly 1.9 million IDPs - have been affected.

On August 18, the UN's Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) reported that the African Union (AU) is in urgent need of funds to sustain its operations in the war-torn western Sudanese region of Darfur and could soon fail to pay salaries for its troops deployed there. The 53-nation AU bloc, which has more than 5,000 troops in Darfur, believes the international community has not pledged enough cash to finance the U.S. \$252 million-a-year mission. While the international community had provided aircrafts, transport for troops, accommodation and military hardware, only a fraction of the cash needed to actually finance the mission has been committed. Only \$79 million had so far been pledged for the peacekeeping operation by the international community - leaving a shortfall of \$173 million. The mission expects to increase its personnel to 7,500 by the end of September.

Bishop John H. Ricard, chair of the U.S. Bishops' International Policy Committee, said recently that international pressure must be applied to the Sudanese government and rebel forces in order to end the violence and suffering in the Darfur region. A larger presence of African Union troops in Darfur is needed for a sustainable peace, he said, and offered his support for a U.S. House resolution, the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, which calls for an increase of African peacekeeping troops in Darfur and for the perpetrators of violence in Darfur to be brought before the International Court of Justice.

Faith in action:

Ask your Congressional representative to support the bipartisan Darfur Peace and Accountability Act (HR 3127). See www.SaveDarfur.org for information about activities in your community on September 21 in solidarity with the people of Darfur and plan to participate.

The Zimbabwe tsunami

The present situation in Zimbabwe has many nicknames - "tsunami" is one. But, according to an eyewitness, it's a very appropriate one. Just as the natural tidal wave indiscriminately wipes out everything in its path, so does the manufactured version. Mass evictions, demolitions, and restrictions proved to be the "mother of all tsunamis." Livelihoods, shelters, and means of making ends meet have been "disappeared," affecting the innocent in the dead of southern Africa winter.

A report by the UN's Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) Executive Director Anna Tibaijuka condemned the Zimbabwean government's program of forced evictions, Operation Murambatsvina (interpreted as both Operation Restore Order and Operation Clean Out Garbage) which has affected 700,000 people since its inception in May 2005. Tibaijuka called on the government to stop the demolitions of homes and markets, pay reparations to those who had lost housing and livelihoods and punish those who, "with indifference to human suffering" carried out the evictions.

People were shifted around in trucks and put into camps, then a few months later many of the same people were put in trucks and returned to the very areas where their dwellings once stood. Orphans who had built pole and *dagaa* houses, lost their "homes" to demolition. One woman who had taken in four orphans had her home destroyed. She told the officials that she was housing the homeless but it made no difference. Later a policeman brought an orphan to her and said she could take care of this one as well.

School children in primary and high schools were told they had to pay additional fees to get back into their schools - exam fees increased tremendously. High school orphans used to raise vegetables to pay for the exams; now they are cost prohibitive.

Little rainfall and extremely poor food production are creating serious food shortages. The cost of bread, maize meal and milk go up regularly. There is no prior notice to a price hike. There are long, long lines for bread, sugar, cooking oil. Everyone is looking for bars of washing soap for clothes. The wheat crop is being destroyed by the kwilea birds (small grain eaters that travel in huge flocks). Previously this annual pest problem was fought with a fleet of crop dusters, or by local scare tactics. But now there is only one plane left and there are no chemicals to use.

Tibaijuka's report said that as many as 2.4 million

people have been affected to varying degrees by an act conducted by police and army "at a time of persistent budget deficits, triple-digit inflation, critical food and fuel shortages and chronic shortages of foreign currency."

Some excerpts are illustrative:

- "It was implemented in a highly polarized political climate characterized by mistrust, fear and a lack of dialogue between government and local authorities, and between the former and civil society."
- "Hundreds of thousands of women, men and children were made homeless, without access to food, water and sanitation, or health care. Education for thousands of school age children has been disrupted."
- "Many of the sick, including those with HIV and AIDS, no longer have access to care. The vast majority of those directly and indirectly affected are the poor and disadvantaged segments of the population. They are, today, deeper in poverty, deprivation and destitution, and have been rendered more vulnerable."
- "The humanitarian consequences of Operation Restore Order are enormous. It will take several years before the people and society as a whole can recover. There is an immediate need for the government of Zimbabwe to recognize the virtual state of emergency that has resulted, and to allow unhindered access by the international and humanitarian community to assist those that have been affected."
- "The government of Zimbabwe should immediately halt any further demolitions of homes and informal businesses and create conditions for sustainable relief and reconstruction for those affected."

After a two-week fact-finding visit, Tibaijuka said the operation was based on colonial-era Rhodesian law and policy that had been "a tool of segregation and social exclusion," and called on President Robert Mugabe to bring national laws into line with the realities of the country's poor and international law.

She noted that the new corrective program Operation Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle ("Stay well") to develop housing was beyond the capacity of the government to implement, and appealed to the international community to mobilize immediate aid to avert further suffering.

For more details on Anna Tibaijuka's report see: http://www.irinnews.org/S_report.asp?ReportID=48240 and http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/zimbabwe/zimbabwe_rpt.pdf

Middle East: Pullout did not end Gaza occupation

A Palestinian ecumenical center in Jerusalem says the occupation of Gaza will not be truly over until Palestinians have full control over air, land and sea borders. The Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center said the removal in August of all 21 Israeli settlements from the Gaza Strip elicited mixed feelings. "There is sorrow in Israel but mixed with joy. ... There is joy in Palestine but mixed with sorrow," it said. The following article is based on Sabeel's Aug. 24 statement, "Reflections on the Gaza Disengagement: Facts and Concerns."

About 8,000 Israeli settlers lived on 42 percent of the 365 square kilometers comprising the Gaza Strip. Some 1.4 million Palestinians lived on the remaining 58 percent. Gaza – twice the size of Washington, D.C. – represents only five percent of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The other 95 percent remains occupied. Throughout the disengagement process, Sabeel said, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has declared his intention to continue expanding Israeli settlements on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem.

Sabeel expressed concern that the bulk of settlers removed from Gaza might move to other illegal settlements on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. Meanwhile, it said, "Gaza will be turned into a giant prison with Israel controlling its borders, air space and seaport and suffocating its 1.4 million people." The Center noted that Israel's withdrawal from Gaza had been unilateral, and it warned that hemming in the Palestinians in Gaza could trigger another Intifada.

Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice have called for a regional conference in which Israel could normalize relations with the Arab states. Sharon, meanwhile, has declared that Israel will annex six settlement blocks on the West Bank as well as all of Jerusalem, Sabeel said.

"Sharon wants a long-term temporary agreement that will freeze any final peace agreement and indefinitely delay

defining borders," according to Sabeel. The statement said the prime minister seems to have changed the mutually accepted "Land for Peace" formula to a formula of "Land for Time." But it said the Gaza withdrawal was meant to be "simply one step towards dealing with the wider issue of illegal occupation."

Sabeel also said that, while settlers in Gaza had opposed being forced out of their homes, "(f)ew made the connection between their removal and the eviction of Palestinians and the destruction of Palestinian homes which has continued since 1948." The Center said 2,704

continued next page

Embedded journalists reported on Gaza pullout

More than 900 newsmen were on hand in Gaza to observe the withdrawal, an Israeli daily reported Aug. 16. Haaretz said the reporters were bused in on shuttles organized by the IDF (Israel Defense Forces).

Much of what lay behind the withdrawal could not be seen by news cameras, however. For example, Israel reportedly compensated the settlers who left Gaza with as much as \$500,000 per family.

The Six-Day War in June 1967, in which Israel seized Gaza and the West Bank, represented perhaps the greatest upheaval in the Gaza Strip since it fell under Egyptian occupation in 1948. In July 1967 an Israeli graduate student in the U.S. wrote in his school newspaper, "The Egyptian rule in 19 years in Gaza did nothing to solve the economic problem of the refugees... (The UN) could not find a solution for 19 years. Why not the Israelis and Arabs solve it in direct negotiation?"

After 38 years of Israeli rule in Gaza, the results are in: as much as 80 percent of the Palestinian population is unemployed, and a similar percentage is thought to be living on less than \$2 per day. Some 25,000 have been rendered homeless since 2000 alone as a result of house demolitions. Some 5,000 Palestinians who worked in Gaza settlements – often for less than Israel's minimum wage – have little hope of severance.

While the news media focused in August on the trauma of Israelis being escorted (or carried) from their illegal settlements to waiting buses, the government calculated the cost of withdrawal in terms of up to 42 day-care centers and 36 kindergartens that would be closed, 5,000 schoolchildren who would have to find new schools, and 166 Israeli farmers who would lose their livelihoods.

It might be asked why the Israeli withdrawal was not reported within the context of Palestinian history 1948 and 1967. For many, that would have been news.

Palestinian homes have been demolished in Gaza alone since 2000. It expressed concern that, "(a)s the world focuses its sympathy on the relocation of displaced settlers, the international community will continue to turn a blind eye to the house demolitions and dispossession of the Palestinian community."

"We remember the sorrow and sense of hopelessness," Sabeel said. "We wish that the settlers ... and the world will begin to empathize and take action to end the occupation and bring about a just peace for the Palestinians, who are still waiting."

Iraq: Voices in the Wilderness refuses to pay fine

On Aug. 12 U.S. District Judge John Bates ordered the Chicago-based human rights organization Voices in the Wilderness to pay a \$20,000 fine for bringing medicine into Iraq. Voices had acted in open, nonviolent civil disobedience to challenge the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq by the U.S. and the UN. The U.S. Treasury Department initially imposed the fine in 2002, days after Voices participated in international actions to oppose the U.S. buildup for war against Iraq. Voices in the Wilderness issued the following statement in response to the order.

Today, the judiciary branch of the U.S. government completed a perfect trifecta of inhumanity in upholding a \$20,000 fine against Voices in the Wilderness for bringing medicine to Iraqi citizens. Judge Bates agrees that it was lawful and proper for the U.S. government to deny needed drugs and medical supplies to Iraq's most vulnerable citizens, despite the evidence that several hundred thousand innocent children were dying because of brutal economic sanctions.

Voices will not pay a penny of this fine. The economic sanctions regime imposed brutal and lethal punishment on Iraqi people. The U.S. government would not allow Iraq to rebuild its water treatment system after the U.S. military deliberately destroyed it in 1991. The U.S. government denied Iraq the ability to purchase blood bags, medical needles and medicine in adequate supplies -- destroying Iraq's health care system.

We chose to travel to Iraq in order to openly challenge our country's war against the Iraqi people. We fully understood that our acts could result in criminal or civil charges. We acted because when our country's government is committing a grievous, criminal act, it is incumbent upon each of us to challenge in every nonviolent manner possible the acts of the government.

We continue to oppose the U.S. occupation of Iraq, which continues the devastation of the Iraqi people. Over the past two years of occupation, the health care

and water systems in Iraq have not improved. Nearly 300,000 children under the age of five now suffer from acute child malnutrition. It's likely that over 100,000 Iraqis have died because of the occupation -- either killed outright by military action or died because of the lack of safe drinking water, adequate health care, lack of food. What has our country wrought in Iraq?

We choose to continue our non-cooperation with the government's war on the Iraqi people through the simple act of refusing to pay this fine. To pay the fine would be to collaborate with the U.S. government's ongoing war against Iraq. We will not collaborate.

We fully understand that the U.S. government may take other action against Voices in the Wilderness, or possibly us as individuals, for our continued refusal to collaborate with the government's policies. But we invite representatives from the government to enter into dialogue with us about how best to correct the misguided, ill-conceived and criminal acts of our country towards the Iraqi people. We invite all U.S. citizens to pause and consider how we might bring about an end to the bloodshed and the violence in Iraq -- an end to the occupation and payment of reparations to Iraq for the devastation our country has wrought upon the Iraqi people these past 15 years.

We pause to ponder the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who asked of himself and his co-conspirators in resistance to Hitler, whether they were yet of any use. We too live in times of unspeakable peril and violence. We too live in times when questioning and resisting our government is the one path remaining to act for justice. We too have struggled and seen untold numbers of innocent people die at our government's hand. We too answer as Bonhoeffer did, that yes, indeed, our acts and fidelity to our brothers and sisters throughout the world are not only of use, but of absolute necessity. We invite all to join us in a conspiracy of life to end our country's war against the Iraqi people.

Beyond Iraq: Proclaiming a true revolution of values

Following is the latest statement from the Religious Working Group on the World Bank-IMF. To sign on, please contact Dave Kane at the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, dkane@maryknoll.org. The deadline is September 21.

As people of faith, our hearts are broken by the horrors of war and economic injustice. The war in Iraq and the devastation of unrelenting poverty evoke from us a cry for change. Nearly forty years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called on the United States to cease the ways of military and economic violence and to seek the paths of peace and justice. Calling for “a radical revolution of values,” he said, “a true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies.”

We see today that war and economic deprivation are but two sides of the same coin. As the United States spends millions of public dollars a day perpetuating violence in Iraq, powerful economic forces, including the World Bank and IMF promote an economic model that exacerbates the gap between the rich and the poor while causing environmental destruction. By privatizing vital resources like water and services like health care and education and promoting a model of free trade that empowers transnational corporations at the expense of the poor, they are in effect globalizing poverty.

A true revolution of values will look upon the soaring military budget of the United States and crippling debt burdens across the global South, and contrast them with pennies that are spent on education, health care, social security and other basic services, and echo Dr. King’s dire warning that “a nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.”

A true revolution of values will look on the military families in the United States and the families living under fire in Iraq who have both lost loved ones to this war, it will look on veterans who have lost limbs in the U.S. occupation and Iraqis who have lost jobs under a new IMF occupation, and say, “This way of settling differences is not just.”



Two girls in Fallujah, Iraq. Photo courtesy of Voices in the Wilderness, www.vitw.org.

A true revolution of values will see the human suffering and destruction of God’s creation being caused by economic policies designed to benefit the richest at the costs of the poorest and be moved to struggle to create a world in which all the world’s resources are respected and distributed in a way that all people can lead full and dignified lives.

It is time to let go of the strategies of war and economic violence and turn to strategies of peace and economic cooperation. While there is trouble in the land, a new spirit is moving over the peoples of the earth. We join the millions of cries from around the world: “Another world is possible!”

As Dr. King told us, “We in the churches and synagogues have a continuing task while we urge our government to disengage itself from a disgraceful commitment. We must continue to raise our voices if our nation persists in its perverse ways.... We must be prepared to match words with actions by seeking out every creative means of protest possible.... Every one of humane convictions must decide on the protest that best suits their convictions, but we must all protest.”

Today, in the spirit of a true revolution of values, we lift up the cries of millions who oppose the war against Iraq and cry out again: “War is a defeat for humanity!” We lift up the cries of millions who campaign for a just economic order while honoring the billions of silent tears being shed by the victims of the current order/system and cry out: “Economic oppression is a defeat for humanity!”

We are called to spread the message of peace and justice that is at the heart of our faith traditions; to lift our voices in righteous indignation against this war that bombs the people of Iraq and the economic policies that will exclude them from participating in the banquet of life. We pledge to engage in actions of protest and public witness to help bring it to an end, and to be a prophetic voice in the struggles against military and economic domination.

Today we pledge to take up this challenge to do everything possible to end this war, to eradicate poverty, and preserve the integrity of creation - so that future generations may enjoy the promise of equality and justice that our Holy Scriptures call Peace, Salaam, Shalom.

Debt cancellation – A mirage?

A World Bank staff report and new efforts by the IMF to impose macroeconomic policy reforms on impoverished countries raised concern about whether the international financial institutions would actually implement the agreement for 100 percent debt cancellation reached by the Group of 8 (G8) leaders in June.

The Jubilee USA Network, Fifty Years Is Enough, Africa Action and others who support definitive debt cancellation as a matter of economic justice characterized the G8 deal as an important and precedent-setting step, but one that still falls short of what is needed to address conclusively the crisis of debt faced by the world's impoverished nations.

Yet, the World Bank and IMF seem to be dragging their feet in moving toward implementation of the 100 percent debt cancellation affirmed by the G8. The World Bank report lists the potential cost of the agreements to cancel multilateral debt at more than \$50 billion and describes as problematic the lack of sufficient compensation to the International Development Association (IDA), the Bank's low interest lending arm, which will be most seriously affected. It also joins several European executive directors at the IMF in calling for significant conditions on the debt cancellation.

Even if 100 percent of the debt is cancelled without conditions, impoverished countries may still remain under the thumb of the institutions, according to Fifty Years Is Enough. Recently, the IMF's board of directors established the Policy Support Instrument (PSI), which allows the IMF to continue to influence the policies of countries that do not need IMF financial assistance – whether they were previously indebted or middle-income countries that were always less dependent on IMF loans. The PSI would further concretize the IMF's role in signaling a country's credit-worthiness to other potential creditors, and could be as damaging to impoverished countries as the debt burden itself. It is strongly opposed by critics of the international financial institutions.

In any case, commitments made by the G8 in June will be slow to materialize. In Honduras, for example, the government announced that the G8 approved more than US\$3 billion in debt cancellation for the country, but in reality, debt relief will come to the country only when Honduras meets a number of conditions. This year, Honduras will see only about US\$150 million in debt relief, according to Mauricio Diaz Burdeth, coordinator of the Foro Social de la Deuda Externa de Hondu-

ras (FOSDEH).

In fact, the G8 agreement has generated significant criticism, including in Latin America. HIPC status, writes Latinamerica Press (6/29/05), is “based on narrow economic indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. However, evaluating economies on a macroeconomic level fails to account for Latin America's extreme economic inequality, meaning that high levels of poverty are averaged out by wealth that is concentrated in very few hands.”

So countries like Peru are classified as middle-income countries and therefore do not qualify for debt cancellation. Yet, over half of Peruvians live in poverty on less than \$2 per day and 25 percent lives in extreme poverty on less than \$1 per day, while Peru's total foreign debt equals 46 percent of its GDP and 20 of the national budget is spent servicing the debt.

In addition, many Latin American countries are in debt to the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB) and the Andean Development Corporation (ADC). While the G8 agreement proposes to cancel all multilateral debt owed to the World Bank, the IMF and the Africa Development Bank, the IDB and the ADC are not included in the deal.

Latinamerica Press also reports a concern in the region that donor countries will use the G8 deal as an excuse to avoid honoring their commitments to raise official development assistance (ODA) levels to 0.7 percent of GDP by 2015. Already the region is feeling the impact of ODA withdrawal. The British Department for International Development has closed programs in ‘middle income’ countries such as Peru, and the Canadian International Development Agency is focusing its ODA on just 25 countries in Latin America, the same four countries due to benefit from debt cancellation.

Fifty Years Is Enough concludes, “For years, debt cancellation campaigners have advocated for 100 percent debt cancellation without harmful conditions. Advocates have been critical of the June G8 deal, saying that not enough countries are represented and that though it is a step forward, it is overly dependent on existing IMF conditions and the failed HIPC program. Tying conditions directly to debt cancellation in addition to the PSI could negate any potential benefits of the G8 deal.”

For additional information see www.jubileeusa.org, www.50years.org, www.africaaction.org, and www.latinamericapress.org.

Small arms: Second UN biennial meeting

The Second Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms (BMS) took place on July 11-15 at the UN headquarters in New York. The first had been held on July 2003. Both were a follow-up to the 2001 UN Conference and its Program of Action (PoA). These biennial meetings were not negotiating sessions, but rather meant to report progress on the PoA. In both, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) presented their points of view and research on governments' actions or shortcomings in seeking to solve the problem of small arms proliferation and related violence.

United Nations data estimate that worldwide during the 1990s, the use of small arms was responsible for the deaths of five million people, forced 50 million people to leave their homes, and dispossessed millions more of property, their livelihood, family and communities. This continuing devastation was the impetus for the UN's 2001 Conference on the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects.



The focus on illicit trade was what was possible, given the economic and military interests of states and non-state manufacturers and sellers. Nevertheless, at the UN 2001 Conference, NGOs pressured and presented data on the difficulties of separating legal from illegal trade, and on the equally devastating effects of both "legal" and "illegal" weapons. They called for tough controls, and the Conference adopted the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects. This requires governments to:

- Make illicit gun production/possession a criminal offense.
- Establish a national coordination agency on small arms.
- Identify and destroy stocks of surplus weapons.
- Keep track of officially-held guns.
- Issue end-user certificates for exports/transit.
- Notify the original supplier nation of re-export.
- Engage in the Disarmament, Demobilization & Reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants, including collection and destruction of their weapons.
- Support regional agreements and encourage moratoria.
- Mark guns at point of manufacture for identification and tracing.

- Maintain records of gun manufacture.
- Engage in more information exchange.
- Ensure better enforcement of arms embargoes.
- Include civil society organizations in efforts to prevent small arms proliferation.

Related with the last point of the PoA, at least 20 governments included members of civil society in their national delegations to the BMS-2005. NGOs from 56 countries participated, organized under the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), showing the growing commitment of non-state actors to peace, human security and disarmament. NGOs are also joining the proposal of the Committee of Nobel Peace Laureates for an international, legally binding convention to control international arms transfers, to ban transfers of arms to be used to violate established standards on human rights, humanitarian law and non-aggression. At the most recent BMS, 25 government delegations expressed their support for an Arms Transfer Treaty (ATT) and 50 more expressed the need of global standards.

On the other hand, civil society pro-gun organizations also presented their views in an organized network, under the leadership of the U.S. National Rifle Association (NRA). They are campaigning for less control.

John Michael Snyder, recognized as a U.S. gun law expert by this network, believes that the PoA "abridges the Second Amendment rights of people in the United States." He recently issued a virulent attack on Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Holy See's Permanent Observer to the UN for supporting PoA and international control measures: "[The archbishop's] public support for the proposed UN international arms control treaty is a direct attack on the God-given right of law-abiding citizens to self-defense. As such, it is an attack on the very right to life itself. Coming from an official of the world's purportedly premier pro-life entity, it comes as a shocking example of public hypocrisy."

Faith in action:

Create awareness in your parishes and communities on the destructive nature of small arms and their proliferation, and on the need for strict transfer regulation. Take action when possible to demand restrictions on small arms transfers. For more information, go to: www.iansa.org and www.armstradetreaty.com.

Aid for trade: Trade Capacity Building Assistance

In recent years, a significant increase in the amount of international aid monies has been given to a relatively new category called Trade Capacity Building Assistance (TCBA). From 2001-2003, there was a 36 percent increase in global TCBA, and at their meeting in June of this year, the G8 finance ministers encouraged each other to increase this form of aid. The U.S. is by far the largest contributor to TCBA worldwide, providing 49 percent of the \$1.4 billion that went directly to recipient countries in 2003, and increasing its TCBA funding to \$930 million in 2004, most of which flows through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

More commonly referred to as “aid for trade,” TCBA is designed to help countries from the global south take better advantage of trade. It covers a large spectrum of activities such as building large infrastructure projects like roads, ports and airports, which allow goods to reach foreign markets. Other projects help create or improve institutions to administer, promote and regulate trade; train managers, technicians and staff to run such institutions; help negotiators sharpen their negotiating skills to set better terms in trade negotiations; and help more vulnerable social, agricultural and industrial sectors deal with the impacts of these trade deals and adapt to increased competition as protective tariffs are removed. TCBA has been described as a three-legged stool supporting poorer nations in negotiating trade agreements, implementing them, and adjusting to the impact of changes brought about by trade.

Certainly a huge discrepancy exists among countries and their abilities to negotiate and adapt to trade agreements, which results in unequal negotiating power. In the WTO negotiations for example, the U.S. and many European countries have dozens of specialists, each of whom concentrates on small subsections of the vast and technical documents, assisting their countries’ negotiators. Meanwhile, many smaller countries have only a handful of negotiators who must be able to grasp all the details of hundreds of pages of technical language, often not even in their native tongue. Back in their home countries, a lack of adequately trained staff who can formulate technical proposals or carry out the changes required by trade agreements also impedes their participation in negotiations. Despite the clear need for TCBA, many pitfalls need to be avoided for it to be truly effective. Some of the principal concerns that civil society organizations have raised regarding TCBA are: a

built-in conflict of interest in TCBA; a lack of involvement of receiving countries in the planning and implementation of projects; and the fact that TCBA is designed to help in the implementation of neo-liberal policies that tend to help wealthy countries instead of the targeted poor countries.

TCBA is unlike other types of aid because the objectives of developed countries as TCBA donors can easily conflict with their commercial interests as trading powers. They may be prone to decide upon what type of assistance to provide according to their own interests rather than those of the recipient country. For example, in the run up to the Seattle WTO Ministerial in 1999, a U.S.-funded TCBA package in Senegal for policy makers and private sector actors strongly emphasized issues which were important to the U.S. (intellectual property rights), while deliberately overlooking issues more important to Senegal that conflict with



U.S. interests (the need to do away with agricultural subsidies). In testimony before a Congressional subcommittee, a USAID administrator admitted that the U.S. trade representative works to “ensure that U.S. TCBA efforts support the administration’s negotiating agenda.” Examples of donor projects that promote the recipient country’s trade interests against their own are very rare.

Most TCBA projects are defined and implemented by donor countries. For example, the WTO’s Technical Assistance Plan was devised by its own Secretariat rather than by the more than 80 countries who are intended to be the recipients of the aid. The content of TCBA should be determined by the recipient country as part of a national development strategy which has been defined by a wide array of organizations including not only government and business, but marginalized groups and the poor. If no such strategy exists in a country, then that should be the first priority of TCBA. As one West Africa trade negotiator commented, “As it is practiced now, the assistance that my government is being given by the U.S. and the multinationals is to implement existing agreements. It is almost entirely supply-driven and not related to our development priorities.”

Attention should also be given to involving various actors in society such as universities, NGOs and local research institutes so countries can over time develop a broader pool of specialists who can help in determining national interests and setting priorities, instead of heavily focusing only on government and business actors. Most TCBA projects also require that large parts of the money

be spent within the donor country or on donor country organizations. Local organizations, who are often more efficient and better able to understand their countries' cultures and needs, should be more involved in the design and implementation of TCBA projects.

TCBA also needs to be seen in the larger historic frame of the predominance of the neo-liberal model used to shape policies throughout the two-thirds world. Perhaps the basic flaw of TCBA is that much of it is simply "selling the WTO" and other trade agreements as is. A clear interest exists on the part of global South countries to change these agreements, but much of TCBA is designed only to accept and implement them. The advice given regarding appropriate national policies and negotiating positions tends to push countries into the current economic system and help them to comply with rules set by wealthier countries. These are the same rules that

have been pushed on to poor countries through conditions on loans and aid in the past.

Clearly not all TCBA is bad for countries in the global South. Many are able to use it to develop their own policies and positions in regards to trade. But a number of questions must be looked at seriously in order for it to truly benefit poor countries, especially, "Is it possible for poor countries to help build up other countries so that they can compete more effectively against them?" Genuine TCBA needs to foster increased capacity within the global South countries to challenge existing trade rules and processes and build up their own proposals that best suit their interests. Because it is now being used to enhance and reinforce structural adjustment conditionalities and ways of thinking that benefit richer countries over poorer ones, it is being seen by some as simply "old wine in slightly new skins."

World Trade Organization rules on bananas

On August 1 the World Trade Organization (WTO) ruled in favor of Latin American banana producers against a European Union (EU) proposal to raise import tariffs on bananas from Latin America, but not those from Africa, the Caribbean or the Pacific (ACP). The WTO found the scheme illegal. The following account is based on an article in NotiCen (8/11/05).

Earlier this year, the EU started experimenting with ways to favor its former colonies over the large corporate producers of Latin America. The ACP countries typically produce bananas on family-owned small farms, whereas the Latin American product comes mostly from large plantations owned by multinational corporations, under conditions that have for many years been criticized for labor abuses and environmental practices.

The big winners in this WTO decision are Dole, Chiquita, and Del Monte. The ACP losers are Belize, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Dominica, Grenada, the Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Madagascar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, Somalia, and Suriname.

The WTO decision marks the second loss for the EU in the banana wars. In the 1990s, the EU was pushed to scrap a complex quota system in favor of a tariff regime that was to begin January 2006. This latest decision stems from that order.

The decision was well-received in Central America. Costa Rican Trade Minister Manuel Gonzalez said he was glad the arbitrators saw through the EU's protec-

tionist posture.

Trade negotiations pit poor countries against rich ones as a matter of structural fact. But, with bananas, there is more complexity to choosing sides. On a rich-against-poor basis, the rich are the transnationals operating in Latin America versus the ACP family farmers. Seen from a different angle, it is also poor versus poor.

The lot of the banana worker in Central America is not an enviable one. In Panama, the typical worker earns US\$7.20 a day, adding up to a biweekly salary of US\$86.40. From that, US\$6.26 is deducted for social security. The worker pays around US\$11 from that pay envelope for electricity and water, after which come expenses for transportation, education, clothing, and food, leaving, according to figures from the Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria del Banano y Afines (SITRAIBANA), an average daily net of US\$4.90. If this wage were to support a family of five, this comes to US\$0.98 per person per day.

When things go badly for the transnationals, they pick up and leave, as they have done in Panama, Guatemala, and elsewhere, or they sell their facilities to workers who must eat the losses but must still sell their bananas to the transnationals, which, relieved of the burdens of ownership, can then manage to eke out a profit. Because the workers rarely have alternatives to taking over the plantations, the government must then assume the risk by providing loans, guarantees, and technical assistance to effect the transaction.

Corporate accountability: "Big box" store sites

"The growth of the large-scale retail industry has brought with it a growing number of concerns, ranging from controversies with communities affected by retail siting decisions to environmental damage ... As socially responsible investors, we believe that these risks could largely be averted through effective due diligence policies and procedures that are sensitive to the social and environmental issues presented by each prospective site and that encourage meaningful communication and interaction with affected stakeholders." So begins "Outside the Box: Guidelines for Retail Store Siting," a report from Christian Brothers Investment Services, Inc. (CBIS) and Domini Social Investments (Domini) and endorsed by 20 other institutional investors.

In the wake of dozens of community-level controversies across the United States and Mexico over sites selected for "big box" stores, CBIS and Domini, two socially responsible investment firms, issued on July 11 a set of guidelines for major retailers to use in making decisions about store site locations, land procurement and leasing.

The guidelines urge major retailers to embrace environmental stewardship; public disclosure of store siting policies; advance consultation with affected communities; respect for indigenous cultures; protection of cultural heritage; and adherence to "smart growth" practices. The report strongly recommends that all retailers have a clearly formulated, well-monitored and effective policy for assessing and mitigating social and environmental risks associated with store siting. The report also contains dozens of examples of past controversies, some positive cases, and suggestions and resources that companies may use to minimize future conflicts.

Examples of how retailers have handled store siting issues negatively or positively include:

- **Community relations:** To restrict large-scale retail development, the town of Dunkirk, MD imposed a limit on the size of stores. In what some residents believed was an attempt to bypass the cap, Wal-Mart proposed building two stores in Dunkirk, side-by-side. While each store would meet the size limit imposed by the law, together the two buildings would exceed it by 30 percent.
- **Indigenous peoples' rights:** In October 2004, a Wal-

Mart in Hawaii opened amid protests from indigenous Hawaiians seeking prompt reburial of the remains of 44 of their ancestors that had been unearthed during the store's construction. The company had encountered other controversies related to indigenous peoples' heritage in Tennessee and New York.

- **Eminent domain:** In recent years, a number of private property owners have filed lawsuits or mounted protests in opposition to plans by towns and cities to seize land for sale to large retailers, including Costco, Home Depot, Target and Bed, Bath and Beyond. In one such instance in New Rochelle, NY, in 2001, residents defeated city plans to condemn a small suburban neighborhood to make way for an IKEA store. This issue is likely to continue to affect retailers, despite the recent Supreme Court decision upholding the legality of using eminent domain for economic development.

- **Smart growth:** In late 2005, Home Depot will open a store on the site of a former concrete plant in Placerville, California. The company has restored the bed of a creek that flowed through the property, landscaped its banks with native plants, provided walkways and bridges for pedestrian access, and designed the store's façade to blend in with the California foothill community. The company was praised for revitalizing an existing business district and for not building on the outskirts of town.

- **Disclosure of policy and siting plans:** Target includes a short section on "Sustainable Real Estate Development & Design" in its 2004 Social Responsibility Report. It notes that the company conducts environmental due diligence when acquiring property, that it seeks to site stores when possible on environmentally restored properties, and that it intends to consult with communities and local planning commissions early in the project stage.

Socially responsible investors sent the report to major retailers and are encouraging them to develop guidelines outlined in the report.

For more information: The full report may be reviewed online at <http://www.cbisonline.com> and <http://www.domini.com>.



Resources

- 1) **National Weekend of Faith in Action, October 21-23, 2005:** Amnesty International USA's National Weekend of Faith in Action on the Death Penalty (NFWA) is a weekend of solidarity action organized locally by faith communities across the U.S. Some goals for the weekend: to engage a broad spectrum of faith communities in activities focused on the death penalty issue, to be initiated on this weekend and continued throughout the year; to foster open dialogue on the death penalty issue among all people of faith; to provide faith communities with appropriate organizing tools and resources for addressing the death penalty and taking actions that advance abolition; to support the unique role that faith communities can play in promoting reconciliation as an alternative to violence in all its variations; to enhance the grassroots involvement of faith communities in local, state, and federal abolition efforts throughout the year. For more information about this initiative, please contact Kristin Houlé at khoule@aiusa.org or 202-544-0200, ext. 496.
- 2) **Truth, Torture and the American Way: The History and Consequences of U.S. Involvement in Torture:** This new book, written by Jennifer Harbury, tells the history of the United States' government's involvement in mistreatment in Latin America, Southeast Asia and the Middle East. It provides analysis of how torture became an acceptable, though hidden, form of domination, and how the abuses at Abu Ghraib in Iraq was not a singular event but was rather the most recent episode of torture at the behest of the U.S. military. Published by Beacon Press, 189 pages plus notes and index, soft cover. \$14. Contact Beacon Press at www.beacon.org, 25 Beacon Street, Boston MA 02108; 617-742-2110.
- 3) **Liquid Assets: The Critical Need to Safeguard Freshwater Ecosystems:** Written by Sandra Postel, this short book (60 pages, plus notes and index) examines the damage done to freshwater systems around the world, and analyzes the work being done to reverse the current trend. Part of the Worldwatch Paper series, which provide in-depth, quantitative and qualitative analysis of the major issues affecting prospects for a sustainable society. Both the hardcopy and the PDF versions are \$7. Contact the Worldwatch Institute, www.worldwatch.org, 1776 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20036.
- 4) **Recommendations from EPIC: The Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC)** has recommended ten books to help readers understand Iraq and the region, the impact of the war and the challenges of nation-building in post-Saddam Iraq. The first recommendation is *A Soldier's Story: From Arab Rule to Independent Iraq – The Memoirs of Jafar Pasha al-Askari*. A Sunni Arab from Mosul, Al-Askari joined the Arab revolt against the Turks in 1916. He was killed in the Iraqi army's first coup attempt in 1936. The title list, book descriptions, additional recommendations and links for placing orders can be found on the EPIC website at <http://www.epic-usa.org/>. Each purchase will help support peace and democracy in Iraq, as the book seller will donate 7.5 percent of all book sales to EPIC campaigns and programs.
- 5) **God's Economy: Biblical Studies from Latin America:** These collected essays, originally published in Spanish, represent the work of many of Latin America's leading biblical scholars, both Protestant and Catholic. Their message, rooted in the biblical theme of Jubilee, bears a prophetic challenge for all who take their faith seriously. Contributors include: Elsa Tamez, Jorge Pixley, José Miguez Bonino, Pablo Richard, Alicia Winters, and José Severino Croatto. Edited by Ross Kinsler and Gloria Kinsler, co-workers in mission for the Presbyterian Church, who spent 25 years as theological educators in Central America. 260 pages. \$28. Order from Orbis Books, P.O. Box 308, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0308; www.orbisbooks.org (search for "Kinsler"); orbisbooks@maryknoll.org; or call 800-258-5838.
- 6) **Imagine a World: Poetry for Peacemakers:** Compiled by Peggy Rosenthal, this collection of poetry is a great resource for peacemaking and justice-seeking, in personal meditation or reflection, at prayer services, in small groups or in meetings. It includes poems about war and injustice; poems about celebrating life; poems about protests; and poems to be used in rallies. Poems written by Daniel Berrigan, Barbara Kingsolver, Wendell Berry, Lucille Clifton, Martin Espada, Thich Nhat Hanh, Alice Walker and more are featured. Published by Pax Christi USA. \$14. Contact Pax Christi, 532 W. 8th Street Erie, PA 16502; 814-453-4955; info@paxchristiusa.org; www.paxchristiusa.org.