

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

*a bimonthly newsletter of information on
international peace and justice issues*

September/October 2006
Volume 31, Number 5

Seeking peace in the global neighborhood 3

ASIA/PACIFIC AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Japan: Article 9 of peace constitution at risk 4

Philippines: Hong Kong group challenges Arroyo 5

Thailand: Cheap profits perpetuate child labor..... 6

Cambodia: Time running out to try Khmer Rouge 7

Middle East: No winners, only losers in conflict..... 8

Gaza Strip: Humanitarian disaster looms again 9

AFRICA

Sudan: Long road to peace 10

Uganda: Possible peace plan with LRA..... 11

Zimbabwe: Currency, land crises continue 12

DRC: Elections combat legacy of colonialism 13

LATIN AMERICA

Brazil: Campaign fights privatization, corruption 15

Mexico: Election fraud, corruption claims 16

Bolivia: Pressure builds to return Goni 18

Costa Rica: Little support for CAFTA..... 19

No More CAFTAs pledge campaign 20

Peru: Camisea pipeline 21

Haiti: Hope or no hope? 22

U.S.: Supreme Court rules for detainee rights 23

World Urban Forum: Swelling cities..... 25

HIV/AIDS: International AIDS Conference 2006 26

Resources 27

MARYKNOLL OFFICE FOR GLOBAL CONCERNS:

Peace, Social Justice and the Integrity of Creation
<http://www.maryknollogc.org>

Maryknoll Sisters
Maryknoll Lay Missioners
Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

Marie Dennis — Director.....mdennis@maryknoll.org
 Judy Coode.....jcoode@maryknoll.org
 Yamileth Coreas.....ycoreas@maryknoll.org
 Sr. Jean Fallon, MM.....jfallon@mksisters.org
 David Kane, MLM.....dkane@maryknoll.org
 Rev. Jim Kofski, MM.....jkofski@maryknoll.org
 Susan Weissert, MLM.....sweissert@mksisters.org

MOGC Washington

P.O. Box 29132
 Washington, D.C. 20017
 (202)832-1780 phone
 (202)832-5195 fax
 ogc@maryknoll.org

MOGC Maryknoll NY

P.O. Box 311
 Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545-0311
 (914)941-7575 phone
 (914)923-0733 fax
 ogc@maryknoll.org

MOGC UN Office

777 First Ave., 10th Fl.
 New York, N.Y. 10115
 (212)973-9551 phone

Maryknoll Productions
(videos, posters)

P.O. Box 308
 Maryknoll NY 10545
 (800)227-8523
 salesmwp@maryknoll.org

TAKE ACTION - Email, call, fax or write U.S. decisionmakers

President George W. Bush
 The White House
 Washington, D.C. 20500
www.whitehouse.gov

Vice President Dick Cheney
 The White House
 Washington, D.C. 20500
vice_president@whitehouse.gov

White House Comment Desk
 (202) 456-1111 phone
 (202) 456-2461 fax

Condoleezza Rice
 Secretary of State
 2201 C Street, N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20520
 (202) 647-6575 phone
 (202) 647-2283 fax
www.state.gov

Donald Rumsfeld
 Secretary of Defense
 The Pentagon
 Washington, D.C. 20301
 (703) 695-5261 phone
www.defenselink.mil

Stephen Hadley
 National Security Council
 The White House
 Washington, D.C. 20500
 (202) 456-1414 phone
 (202) 456-2883 fax

Alberto Gonzales
 Attorney General
 U.S. Department of Justice
 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20530-0001
 (202)353-1555 phone
AskDOJ@usdoj.gov
www.justice.gov

John Bolton
 U.S. Representative to UN
 799 United Nations Plaza
 New York, NY 10017
 (212) 415-4000 phone

Paul Wolfowitz
 President
 World Bank Group
 1818 H Street, N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20433
www.worldbank.org

Orbis Books
 P.O. Box 308
 Maryknoll NY 10545
 (800)258-5838
orbisbooks@maryknoll.org

Rodrigo de Rato y Figaredo
 Managing Director
 International Monetary Fund
 700 19th Street, N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20431
www.imf.org

Current status of bills:
 (202) 225-1772
<http://thomas.loc.gov>

Capitol switchboard:
 (202) 224-3121

www.senate.gov
www.house.gov

Due to security measures, mail delivery to Congressional offices is significantly delayed. 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.

Seeking peace in the global neighborhood

One week after the horrific events of Sept. 11, 2001, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns wrote: "Many of us believe that military retaliation is more likely to exacerbate the violence than to end it. We have to eradicate terrorism of all kinds by addressing the hatred and exclusion that sustain it and promoting global solidarity toward understanding and human dignity... . In the days and months ahead, may we resist the overwhelming temptation to revenge - honoring the memory of those who died in the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon by pursuing a course of action that is guided by truth, refuses to exacerbate the violence, promotes understanding and reconciliation and leads to justice under international law." Within weeks, the U.S. was at war in Afghanistan.

With an ad-hoc group known as Catholics for a Peaceful End to War and Terrorism (CPEWT), we echoed concerns in the aftermath of Sept. 11 outlined by the U.S. Catholic bishops including the need to: re-define security; establish a Palestinian state and security for Israel as the only way to bring peace to the Middle East; overcome the worldwide scandal of poverty; reverse the predominant role of the United States in the international arms trade; halt the growing proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons; and promote a more effective, responsible and responsive UN organization.

Five years later we are still at war in Afghanistan and we are mired in a chaotic conflict in Iraq. Thousands upon thousands of soldiers and civilians – each

one a beloved child of God – here and there are dead or maimed. We have tortured prisoners; threatened "preventive wars"; strengthened our battlefield nuclear capacity; and tripled our military budget – on the backs of the poor. In our opinion, we are all less secure, and the roots of hopelessness and terrorism are well-nourished and flourishing.

As we approach this anniversary, we urge you to pray for peace and for conversion – that the United States may one day become a source of peace not war in the global neighborhood.

Maryknoll Prayer for Peace and a Healing of the Wounds of War

Faced with the frightening prospect of continued chaos in Iraq and Afghanistan, we affirm our commitment to reverence the dignity of each person and the whole community of life.

For an end to the violence that is ravaging Iraq, *O God of Peace, we pray.*

For an end to the violence that is emerging again in Afghanistan, *O God of Peace, we pray.*

For an end to the mourning, an end to the suffering, *O God of Peace, we pray.*

For comfort and the healing of broken hearts, *O God of Peace, we pray.*

For the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, *we pray.*

For surviving family members and loved ones in the United States, *we pray.*

For those whose broken bodies carry the scars of war, *we pray.*

For the earth damaged by war, *we pray.*

God of Life, we are filled with a deep yearning for peace. Maryknoll has seen too often the suffering wrought by war close to home and on the other side of the world. We ache with the pain and fear of those who have loved ones - or who themselves are - now in danger. We ask you to guide our leaders toward a just and lasting resolution of this dreadful conflict. We ask you to gift the human community with a new capacity to build right relationships in a bitterly divided world.

Seeking to participate actively in the transformation of the world, pursuing social justice, the integrity of creation, and with even greater intensity in these times peace, we ask this in the name of Jesus, our brother. Amen.

Japan: Article 9 of peace constitution at risk

A proposed amendment to Article 9 of Japan's peace constitution could harm Japan's relations with its Asian neighbors and accelerate an arms race in the region, peace advocates say.

Article 9 provides that “the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.” However, a constitutional amendment proposed by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) could radically alter the role of Japan's Self Defense Force (SDF), already the world's second strongest military force.

The proposed amendment calls for “a self-defence army ... under the command of the Prime Minister” that could act with other nations “to secure international peace and safety, to maintain public order in emergency situations, or to protect the life and liberty of the people.”

The SDF has already been involved in at least two actions that critics said were unconstitutional under Article 9. In 2002 Japan dispatched the SDF to the Indian Ocean, primarily to refuel allied warships. More recently Japan sent SDF personnel to Iraq on a peace-building mission.

Japan has not fought in any war for 60 years, and no member of the SDF has been killed in hostile action. In October 2005, however, Japan and the U.S. signed an agreement recognizing common strategic objectives including “preventing and eradicating terrorism,” according to the Japan Catholic Council for Justice and Peace (JCCJP).

The war on terror “provides the U.S. government with a pretext for military action anywhere and anytime it chooses,” says Auxiliary Bishop Michael Goro Matsuura, JCCJP president. “Because there is no clearly defined ‘enemy,’ there is no one with whom terms of peace can be negotiated and no one whose surrender would constitute an end to the war. ... It is therefore a war with no endpoint.” Bishop Matsuura, who visited Washington, D.C., in August, says the proposed amendment is part of a strategy to integrate Japanese and U.S. forces and equip them “to carry out U.S.-directed global missions.”

Changing Article 9 could hurt Japan's relations with its Asian neighbors, according to a workshop last September at Nanzan University in Nagoya. Focusing on ways Japan and Australia could con-

tribute to regional and global security, participants said there was already “a significant degree of distrust of Japan in the region.” This was attributed to such issues as Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, textbook issues and a perceived failure of Japan to apologize for the past.

Amending Article 9 “would be equivalent to an overnight arms build-up of massive proportions,” workshop participants said. “It would almost definitely precipitate an arms race (or, more accurately, accelerate one that is already under way), significantly enhancing military tension in the region.”

In contrast to the traditional view of military power, workshop participants discussed the need for human security. “(I)n areas of broader human security, including such areas as poverty, human welfare, ecology, human rights, governance, etc., a multilateral approach is essential,” they said. Dealing with such issues “is an important dimension of human security, and of national security too, when one considers that these problems do contribute to a world conducive to the growth of terrorism.”

A summary of the joint Australia-Japan workshop discussion can be found at the website for Nanzan University's Institute for Social Ethics, <http://www.nanzan-u.ac.jp/ISE/index.html>.

To amend Japan's constitution requires a two-thirds vote in both houses of the Diet and a 50 percent majority in a national referendum. Bishop Matsuura warns there are signs of declining support for Article 9 among both parliamentarians and the general public, which could leave the peace constitution “very, very vulnerable.”

“(O)ne way to deal with the security dilemma would be for each country to have a peace constitution similar to Japan's,” workshop participants concluded. “If Japan, instead of changing its constitution, would put its diplomatic effort into encouraging other countries to adopt similar peace clauses in their constitutions, it would move the world much closer to peace.”

Faith in action:

Please write to the Prime Minister and urge him not to amend the Constitution: Mr. Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan, Prime Minister's Office, 1-6-1 Nagata-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan 100-8968. A government webpage at <http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/forms/comment.html> also accepts comments and letters.

Philippines: Hong Kong group challenges Arroyo

A Hong Kong-based fact-finding commission has expressed doubt over Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's pledge Aug. 1 to resolve the extra-judicial killings in her country. (See "Philippines: Human rights violations increase," NewsNotes May/June 2006.) One commission member says 704 political murders were committed in the five and a half years Arroyo has been in office. The 11-member Hong Kong Campaign for the Advancement of Human Rights released its report Aug. 2 in Hong Kong. It says it will present its findings to the Philippine and Hong Kong governments and to the UN. This story, published with permission, is abridged from an Aug. 13 report in the Hong Kong Sunday Examiner.

... Commission member Michael Anthony of the [Hong Kong]-based Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC) questioned the ability of the government's newly-formed investigative task force to comprehensively probe the spate of seemingly politically-motivated murders taking place in the Philippines.

Noting that the Philippine government body Task Force Usig (TFU), hurriedly put together on May 13 this year, only lists 127 cases of extra-judicial killings to be investigated and claims action on just 47 of them, Anthony called it an entirely inadequate response to the 704 outside-the-law killings estimated by prominent members of the House of Representatives to have taken place since Arroyo came into office in January 2001 (up to July 8 this year).

He explained that this claim tallies with estimates made by a variety of human rights groups, and victims include members of legal opposition movements, Church personnel, union leaders, journalists and suspected New People's Army sympathizers.

Ho Wai-yang, of the Hong Kong Bar Association, added that 10 human rights lawyers and 15 judges who had passed down anti-government decisions are among the slaughtered, casting deep suspicion on the independence of the legal process.

Ho noted on a more disturbing note that the chief of Arroyo's newly-appointed [TFU] investigative team, the deputy director-general of police, Avelino Razon, revealed during an interview with the fact-finding commission that he regards these

killings as passé. "He seemed to think this is normal," she commented with incredulity.

Commission convener Bruce Van Voorhis, the communications officer for ALRC, expressed concern at Arroyo's Aug. 1 "ten weeks to solve ten murder cases" directive to the Department of Justice and the Philippine National Police. "What about the rest of them?" he questioned, noting the Philippine government could not be exonerated from suspicion of involvement in the murders until every one of the 704 cases has been fully investigated and suspects tried before a court of law. He noted that this failure destroys the Philippines' integrity as a foundation member of the United Nations' International Human Rights Commission. To date, only one person has been convicted.

He explained that without dedication to investigate every case fully, the in-house task force has the freedom to close off any case at any time, leaving the door wide open to corruption and protection of friends. ...

Ho expanded on other contradictions in Philippine legal and investigative practices. "Government authorities ignore directives and rulings of the Supreme Court with impunity," she explained. She also said that because the No. 1 suspect in many extra-judicial killings, the Philippine military, is part of the investigating arm of the government, it becomes privy to all information collected during enquiries.

Anthony noted that TFU chief Razon told the commission that "we cannot investigate a crime without a body." The human rights investigator explained this leaves the way open for would-be assassins to simply "make people disappear," giving extra business to the country's thriving salvaging industry (where the body is never found), widely believed to be primarily police- and military-financed.

Anthony pointed to the in-house nature of the TFU. "It means it lacks independence," he explained, adding that, in his experience, self-investigative bodies seldom come up with a guilty verdict. ...

Van Voorhis reserved his biggest salvo for the TFU's Razon, explaining that during their two-hour interview, the investigative chief claimed that "no government personnel were involved," indicating that he had already destroyed the impartiality of enquiries by pre-judging the issue.



Thailand: Cheap profits perpetuate child labor

The International Labor Organization (ILO) says the child labor situation in Thailand is improving, yet results are mixed. While fewer Thai children might be exploited in the job market, migrant children seem to have taken their place. As many as half of all child laborers in Thailand are reportedly Burmese.

Thai values have traditionally included a role for child workers, but today economics seem to have trumped cultural values. “Thai society has shaped children to obey and pay gratitude to their parents as the individuals ushering them into this world,” the ILO says. “As parents, they also expect their children to help them in return when they grow up, particularly by providing economic assistance. ... In the industrialized society of urban Thailand today, however, working children are in demand due to the fact that they are cheap labour.”

The ILO says work performed by children under 18 is not always considered child labor, explaining that “(m)illions of young people undertake work, paid or unpaid, that is appropriate for their age and maturity.” Rather, “child labor” is criticized when it comprises any unacceptable form of child work – work that exposes children to harm or exploitation. The worst forms of child labor, the ILO says, include slavery, debt bondage, prostitution, pornography and forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.

The ILO estimates there are four million child workers in Thailand, including 600,000 between 13 and 14. (A good summary, with a breakdown by industry, can be found on the U.S. Department of Labor website at <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/media/reports/iclp/sweat/thailand.htm>.)

The number of children under 15 in Thailand’s labor force dropped from five percent in 1989 to one percent at present, according to an ILO global report released in May. Meanwhile, the number of ethnics among child laborers fell from an estimated 40 percent to 10 percent, but it is thought that children trafficked from neighboring countries have largely made up the difference.

Until recently, most exploited child workers in Thailand came from poor areas of the country, especially Isaan in the northeast. “Now, more Thais have opportunities,” says Tatiya Likitwong, coordinator of the child labor project at the Foundation for Child Development in Bangkok. For example, fam-

ily planning programs have helped reduce family size, education is free through secondary school, and laws prohibit children under 15 from working and set hours and working conditions for those 15-18. But Thailand’s affluence acts as a magnet for its poorer neighbors.

Research in six Thai provinces, discussed at a two-day conference in July in Bangkok, found that up to half of all child laborers in Thailand are Burmese. “We found that the ethnic children are forced to beg by their parents,” says Penpisut Jaisanit, a researcher at Chiang Rai Rajabhat University. “If they cannot find enough money, they are punished. Some girls under 15 work in entertainment places and face sexual harassment at an age when they should be in school.”

A Thai labor official says 30-40 percent of an estimated one million migrant workers in Thailand are women and children. The Labour Ministry is conducting a national survey of migrant child workers, to be finished later this year. ILO senior specialist Panudda Boonpala commends Cambodia, Laos and Thailand for their efforts to end the trafficking of women and children. “Yet, we could not be complacent as child laborers are still found in factories, fishing, construction, agriculture, and service sectors, commercial sexual exploitation and begging,” she says.

Allan Dow of the ILO office in Bangkok says the next step toward ending child labor should be more rigorous inspections of small workshops as well as larger factories. However, solutions can also create new problems. “These migrants find that if the factory’s raided, the factory’s closed. Maybe the owner is arrested or has to appear before some kind of magistrate – then they don’t get paid,” Dow says. “Maybe they’ve worked there for three months; they haven’t had any wages so far. And then, a couple of months later, they get repatriated to their country. There’s still a ways to go to try to correct some of these problems.”

The ILO says it’s a good economic decision to invest in child labor eradication, “as the countries doing so would gain six times more than their investment costs. They would gain a much more skilled and healthy workforce in about 10-20 years after such investment.” With large and small factory owners, seafood processors and farm operators keeping an eye on short-term profit, however, ILO efforts to eradicate child labor could be a tough sell.

Cambodia: Time running out to try Khmer Rouge

The window of opportunity to try former Khmer Rouge leaders is slowly closing. Are the wheels of justice turning even more slowly? Three decades after a quarter of Cambodia's seven million people died under the Khmer Rouge, a special tribunal is preparing to try the highest-ranking surviving leaders. In the interim, however, Pol Pot, "Brother Number One," died in 1998 of a heart attack in his forest hideout. He was 73. Ta Mok, nicknamed "the Butcher," died July 21 at 80 in a military hospital in Phnom Penh.

Other senior Khmer Rouge leaders who defected or surrendered live openly in Cambodia. They include "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea, former head of state Khieu Samphan and former foreign minister Ieng Sary, who reportedly has a mansion in Phnom Penh beside the homes of some of his former victims.

Of the most prominent former leaders, only one – Kaing Guek Iev, a former math teacher also known as Duch – is in custody. Duch, who commanded the Tuol Sleng torture chamber, is accused of overseeing the killing of thousands of Cambodians. He and Ta Mok were expected to be the first to go on trial – as early as next year – on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity for their roles in Cambodia's killing fields from 1975 to 1979.

Because of limited time, space and funding, only about 12 defendants are expected to be prosecuted during the tribunal's projected lifetime of three to five years. Most of those likely to be indicted are already in their 70s and 80s. Nonetheless, organizers of the \$56.3 million UN-backed court hope it will help Cambodia to confront its past and achieve some sense of resolution.

On July 10 the prosecutor's office began its investigation of the men accused of masterminding the Khmer Rouge regime that took 1.7 million lives through torture, execution, overwork, starvation and disease. The first shipment of 383,149 pages of documentary evidence, contained on 524 reels of microfilm, was delivered to prosecutors a week later. However, it could be as long as a year and a half before the first defendant actually faces the mixed Cambodian-foreign tribunal.

Most of an estimated 30,000 low- and mid-

level Khmer Rouge cadres will never face trial, but some could act as witnesses against their former leaders. One such cadre is 52-year-old Him Huy, a father of nine who farms in the paddy fields of Anlong Sah village.

When he was recruited into a predominantly teenage guerrilla army in 1973, Huy was a homesick 17-year-old village boy. He says after the Khmer Rouge took power he was brainwashed with Maoist propaganda and forced to torture and execute "enemies" of the regime. He says he is a victim as much as anyone else. Duch was Huy's commander at Tuol Sleng in Phnom Penh.

So far the U.S. has not offered financial help to the tribunal. "It's way too soon to be clear if the trial is meeting international standards; the process is just beginning," U.S. Ambassador Joseph Musomelli told the Phnom Penh Post on Aug. 9. Musomelli, who has described the Khmer Rouge atrocities as "arguably the worst genocide ever," said, "We're exploring the possibilities of direct funding for the trial, and the judges are the main concern. The competency of the Cambodian judges has raised concerns on Capitol Hill."

Meanwhile, the U.S. has provided between \$7 million and \$9 million to the Documentation Center of Cambodia, whose extensive research on the Khmer Rouge period will be available to court officials for both the defense and the prosecution of those suspected of genocide or crimes against humanity.

A police spokesman said in August that Nuon Chea's health was in serious decline, and he was no longer able to see visitors at his home in Pailin, on the Thai border. The 81-year-old reportedly suffers from high blood pressure and has suffered at least one stroke. In another development Khieu Samphan's home, also in Pailin, is said to have been rented out. Neighbors and friends say he moved 370 kilometers away to Phnom Penh, and they are unsure if he will return.

It might have been disingenuous, but Ta Mok reportedly said in June, "Try me now before I die, so that I can tell the court who is the mastermind of the massacre." As one voice after another among the former Khmer Rouge leadership is stilled, few remain to relate their version of the truth – or to be held to account for it.



Skulls gathered from Cambodia's killing fields

Middle East: No winners, only losers in conflict

Robi Damelin is an Israeli whose son David was killed in March 2002. She is a member of The Parents Circle - Families Forum of bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families supporting peace, reconciliation and tolerance. Her reflection below was published July 27 on the group's website, <http://www.theparentscircle.com/NewsMain.asp?id=98>.

Listening to the rhetoric of this war reminds me of a sports tournament. We beat them by however many points, or they beat us by however many points. But it is not points we are talking about and there is no trophy. The points are human beings with families and loved ones fleeing their daily lives, sometimes succeeding and sometimes not. Whose side shall we take in the tournament? After all, we feel very good about ourselves when we have a side to back. Will we pick the green in Lebanon – they are the underdogs – or shall we pick the blue in Israel? We would perhaps feel better about the blue if they lost more men. Is this how the world looks at a conflict, as a glorified tournament?

In this tournament we must of course have a winning side, otherwise how can we ever sit down and talk to each other? So the green and the blue will go on claiming victory until the very last man, or until they realize that no one wins. And then what? Shall we all leave the battle to lick our wounds? Shall we go back to life? For some, a life after that will never be the same. What about all the loved ones we will never see again? For what did they give up their lives? A further status quo? A life of uncertainty, a roulette of survival. My heart aches for every picture of the victims I see in the paper. I understand what is waiting for the mother and father and all the family and friends. I know the longing, the pain and the eyes constantly brimming with tears, anguish and hurt.

There is no winner, only a greater collection of broken hearts.

Mothers of Israel, Lebanon and Palestine: How many more graves until we

shout stop? How much collective mourning until we shout stop? Let us look into each other's eyes and recognize each other's pain with empathy; let us see the human being behind the green and the blue. Let us force all to come to the table and not to a grave to talk. How many more of our children need to die before we realize there is no revenge for a lost child? We cannot let them take our children away without a word. Where is our voice in all this madness?

Mothers of Israel, Lebanon and Palestine, we must join together in a sense of understanding, and scream stop the killing, stop the killing. For so many years we have repeated the tournament of violence, it is time to look for another way, not the narrative of winning but rather a way of dialogue toward reconciliation, a way to see the human being behind the stigma – in other words, a way to recognize our joint pain.

To those in Lebanon who have lost loved ones in the conflict, we invite you to be in touch with our Palestinian and Israeli members at the Parents Circle Families Forum. We invite you to work with us in a dialogue with a long-term goal of reconciliation. We who have paid the highest price understand the consequences of a never-ending rhetoric of winning. We invite you to look at a future of some hope for the children of our area. A future free of violence, a future free of fear.

Can we not appeal to the world and say: Stop taking sides in the tournament. You are not helping, the Israelis will not disappear in a puff of smoke, nor will the Palestinians and indeed not the Lebanese. You are not helping anyone. Perhaps it is time for you all to support a dialogue toward a long-term process of reconciliation. Let us give up the green and blue and create a joint neutral color.

"An eye for an eye" impossible in Lebanon conflict

"We have now more reasons as Christians to voice out loud our mind and call for moderation and appeal to all sides to give up weapons and start negotiating. We feel it is our prime responsibility to get away from the prehistoric attitude and from awkward [beliefs]: 'Tooth for tooth and eye for eye,' in fact no one has any more teeth to exchange or eyes to offer, we have no more teeth. We are blinded because we got deaf from the noise of explosions on both sides. No one hears anymore the whispers of children, frightened, scared to death before they are massacred!" — *From a reflection on the recent hostilities between Israel and Palestine by Fr. Elias Chacour, the Melkite archbishop of Akko, Haifa, Nazareth and Galilee, who is also a Palestinian and an Israeli citizen.*

Gaza Strip: Humanitarian disaster looms again

As the UN worked in August toward a ceasefire between Israeli and Hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon, a looming humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip received far less attention. As in the past, the potential victims were largely women and children. (See "Middle East: Children suffer in conflict," NewsNotes January/February 2003, and "Israeli occupation contributes to anemia, malnutrition in West Bank and Gaza," NewsNotes September/October 2002.) Israeli forces entered southern Gaza on June 28 after a soldier was kidnapped by Palestinian militants. UN humanitarian agencies working in Gaza reported on conditions there on Aug. 3. The complete statement can be found at <http://ochaonline.un.org/DocView.asp?DocID=4775>.

United Nations agencies in Gaza noted "a sharp decline in the humanitarian situation facing 1.4 million people, more than half of them children" and expressed the fear that, with the preoccupation over fighting in Lebanon, "the tragedy in Gaza is being forgotten." Food supplies and medical services were particularly at risk, they said.

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said 838,000 Palestinian children in Gaza were bearing the brunt of shelling and other attacks. Shortages and closures were interfering with the delivery of quality care, fueling conditions for the spread of communicable diseases among children. Of some 40 Palestinian children killed in Gaza since June 28, almost a quarter were under 10, UNICEF said.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) said shelling in Gaza was limiting women's access to life-saving services such as emergency obstetric care. It said the shelling had damaged health facilities and restricted access to reproductive health services, especially ante-natal and post-natal care. The UNFPA also said it was difficult for health care providers to get to work, especially in areas affected by heavy shelling and military closures.

The World Food Programme (WFP) reported greater dependency on food aid. Two main staples – wheat flour and sugar – were in short supply, and prices were 15 and 33 percent higher, respectively, than in January. To meet the nutritional needs of the most vulnerable non-refugee population, the WFP

said it was increasing the number of people it fed in Gaza from 160,000 to 220,000 each month.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) expressed concern over Gaza's farming and fishing sectors. With severe restrictions on fishing, boats were not even leaving port, cutting the income of some 35,000 people. "Declining cash incomes and dwindling international aid is impairing the ability of producers to acquire seeds, fertilizer, spare parts for greenhouses, irrigation facilities and fishing boat maintenance," the FAO said.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said the targeting of Gaza's infrastructure – particularly the destruction of Gaza's only domestic power plant – had triggered a power shortage and a water shortage, posing a serious threat to people's health as it hampered the functioning of the entire health system.

Citing the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the agencies said that, under international humanitarian law, "all parties to the conflict are obliged to protect civilians during hostilities. Parties must exercise precaution and respect the principle of proportionality in all military operations to prevent unnecessary suffering among the civilian population. The shelling of sites with alleged military significance that result invariably in the killing of civilians, among them an increasing number of children, cannot be justified."

From June 28 to Aug. 3, the agencies said, an estimated 175 Palestinians were killed, including about 40 children and eight women, and more than 620 were injured. In the same period one Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldier was killed and 25 Israeli civilians were injured. Palestinians fired 8-9 rockets per day into Israel, and the Israeli military fired 200-250 artillery shells daily into the Gaza Strip and conducted 220 aerial bombings.

"These facts speak for themselves," the humanitarian agencies concluded. "Closures must be lifted, bearing in mind Israel's legitimate security concerns. Gaza must be given back the capacity to export its goods. Both the Palestinian rocket attacks from Gaza and the disproportionate shelling by the IDF must stop. The United Nations stands firmly by its commitments to uphold the dignity of the Israelis and the Palestinians – and the right of both sides to live in peace and security."



Sudan: Long road to peace

Concerned about implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference recently sent a statement to the president of the Republic of the Sudan, Omar Hassan Ahmed El Bashir. In it they recognized the significance of the CPA, which "makes it possible for us to meet as full plenary of Bishops inside the Sudan after 22 years" and celebrated the "promulgation of the Interim National Constitution and Interim Constitution of Southern Sudan that ... paved the way for the formation of the Government of National Unity (GONU) and the Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS), Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile."

At the same time they identified eight areas of concern:

1) **Governance:** They noted that efforts of the government to enforce law and order are minimal "as indicated by the rampant prevalence of violent conflicts in many parts of the country" and expressed grave concern about corruption, an "invisible enemy of peace in public offices and the society as a whole."

2) **Church status:** The Church, they said, with its holistic ministry for spreading the gospel and peace in Sudan and the entire world, should be respected and protected by the State. Since the parties to the CPA had agreed to create a process to resolve conflict on land issues, the government should "look into the claims of the Church regarding the properties confiscated by the government in different periods and places in the Sudan" and redress these properties through "restoration and compensation."

3) **Abyei:** Disputes over which region controls the area of Abyei have existed for years and most recently have been addressed through the "Protocol on Abyei." In their statement to El Bashir, the bishops expressed alarm at the outright rejection by the government of some of the aspects of the CPA in relation to this protocol. "There is a clear rejection by the Government of National Unity (GONU) led by the National Congress Party (NCP), a partner to the CPA, to implement the Abyei Boundary Commission recommendations. Furthermore, up to now the administration of Abyei is not yet set up. Thus, there is virtually no government to maintain law and order in the area."

4) **Status of administration of Khartoum:** While the CPA provides for a shared administration of Khartoum as the national capital of the Sudan by the parties to the Agreement, the bishops expressed disappointment that the NCP has refused to honor this commitment.

5) **Independent commissions in GONU:** The bishops also noted with great concern that most of the independent commissions provided for in the CPA have not been formed or, in contravention of the Protocol on Power Sharing, they are not equitably representative.

6) **Status of the armed forces and presence of armed groups in Sudan:** They welcomed the redeployment of the army that has taken place, but expressed concern about a lack of compliance with the time frame, as well as about the "destruction of crops, cutting down of fruit trees, destruction of water pumps and burning of stores" – actions "tantamount to scorched earth policy." They therefore called upon the government to speed up the redeployment of the Sudan Armed Forces to help in maintenance of security.

They added. "We, the Catholic bishops, also regret the presence of other armed groups inside Sudan, for instance, the pro-government militias, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ambororo herdsmen. This causes insecurity in Southern Sudan. However, we appreciate the mediation role being undertaken by the Government of Southern Sudan between the Government of Uganda and the LRA [see NewsNotes article, page ____]. We call upon the presidency to exert more efforts towards the peaceful settlement to the conflict so that peace could prevail in northern Uganda and Southern Sudan."

7) **Darfur:** The bishops welcomed the recent efforts made toward the Darfur peace negotiations by the government in Abuja, Nigeria under the auspices of the African Union, but said: "Although the Abuja Peace Agreement has been supported by the African Union, the UN and the international community, the Darfur factions on the ground are divided and the conflict appears to be escalating. We therefore call upon the government to accept the UN resolution to deploy the UN Peace Keeping Force in Darfur to replace the African Union Forces."

[According to Care, the International Rescue Committee, Oxfam International and World Vision, July was the most dangerous month of the three-year-old conflict in Darfur for aid workers.

The increasing insecurity is also limiting the ability of aid agencies to reach people in need, with potentially disastrous consequences. The World Food Program has expressed similar concern that half a million people have been cut off from food aid because of escalating violence during the height of the hunger season before the harvest.]

8) **Eastern Sudan:** Finally, the bishops welcomed and encouraged the signing of the Declaration of Principles (DOP) to the conflict in Eastern Sudan and offered their prayers for the parties to start negotiations to end the conflict.

For additional information see www.africafiles.org, August 9, 2006.

Uganda: Possible peace plan with LRA

On May 13, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni told President Salva Kiir of Southern Sudan that he was willing to negotiate with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in an attempt to end the civil war in Northern Uganda. Museveni made the statement in the presence of African heads of state assembled in Kampala for his inauguration. Earlier that month, during a consultation with a government delegation from Southern Sudan led by Vice President Riek Machar and a mediation team from Pax Christi Netherlands, the LRA also had committed itself to peace negotiations.

The conflict in Northern Uganda, which has persisted for 20 years, is one of the world's greatest humanitarian disasters. In terms of civilian displacement (1.8-2 million), Uganda ranks fourth after Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Colombia. According to recent estimates, 129 people die every day as a result of violence and poor conditions in the displaced camps. This is three times the figure given for Darfur in October 2005 and for Iraq after the invasion of 2003. The LRA has abducted more than 25,000 children, using them as child soldiers and sexual slaves. LRA activities in the region threaten to disrupt implementation of peace agreements in both Sudan and the DRC.

Pax Christi Netherlands has advocated a negotiated solution to the conflict since 1998 and, at the request of church leaders in Northern Uganda and Southern Sudan, has been exploring alternatives that could lead to a political solution. Pax Christi brought about the initial contacts between the three parties. Since 2005, when both the government of Southern Sudan and the LRA leaders sent Pax Christi Netherlands written requests to undertake the role of mediator, several discussions have taken place between the government of Southern Sudan, the LRA and the mediation team.

Southern Sudan's President Kiir is also vice

president of the Sudanese Government of National Unity, and is a proponent of a negotiated resolution to Uganda's conflict. Increasingly in recent years, the war between Uganda and the LRA has been fought on Sudanese territory.

In October 2005, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued a warrant for the arrest of five leaders of the LRA. Thus far, no arrests have been made, but the ICC warrant and the offer of amnesty by President Museveni to LRA leaders if they surrender have provoked heated discussion.

ICC advocates have criticized the amnesty offer, but, according to the Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN), human rights and humanitarian groups in northern Uganda have supported it. "Once peace is reached and basic rights are restored for the people of northern Uganda, local leaders will set the agenda for justice," said AFJN associate director, Michael Poffenberger. "International efforts that derail talks are missing the point that, for the war-weary people of northern Uganda, an end to the hostilities is the beginning of processes that can establish justice."

Pax Christi Netherlands, a supporter of the ICC, has stated publicly that it "does not seek to impede the criminal court in The Hague. Pax Christi believes that justice must be done to the violations." However, peace is a "condition for ending the violence and the human rights violations and for ultimately giving justice to their victims. Sustainable peace is only possible as the result of a political solution that has support from the Ugandan civil society and the affected communities. That is why Pax Christi - at the express request of all the concerned parties - is facilitating the process that must lead to a political solution."

ICC Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo insists that LRA leader Joseph Kony will eventually face trial: "We believe that the best way to finally stop the conflict after 19 years is to arrest the top

leaders. In the end, the LRA is an involuntary army - the majority of fighters are abducted children. Arresting the leaders is the best way to stop those crimes. That is our mission and we believe that we will achieve it in the long run. It is a challenge not for Uganda, Sudan or the [Democratic Republic of] Congo. It is a challenge for the international community."

AFJN's Poffenberger is optimistic about the talks, calling them a very strong opportunity to end the war: "The Southern Sudanese are determined to consolidate control over their territory. LRA leaders face growing military pressure. And the Ugandan government can use these negotiations as an opportunity to improve their fading international reputation."

Of deep concern, however, is an apparent lack of support from the international community. In March, the White House announced that ending the war in northern Uganda by the end of 2006 was a priority, but administration officials have not sent a delegation to monitor negotiations. A recent letter sent to President Bush by 19 U.S. religious leaders

urged the U.S. government to support the peace process. They wrote: "...The United States could play a decisive role in the success of these negotiations, but this will require serious and sustained attention. We encourage you to use all diplomatic means available to hold accountable the parties engaged in the process. We further urge that greater funds be made available for the safe return of displaced peoples and reconstruction of northern Uganda. This will provide an additional incentive to the parties to seek a negotiated settlement."

Faith in action:

Write to President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, to repeat the plea of these religious leaders.

For additional information, contact Michael Poffenberger; Associate Director, Africa Faith and Justice Network; michaelpoffenberger@afjn.org. See Pax Christi International's website at www.paxchristi.net or www.UgandaCAN.org/peacetalks.php

Zimbabwe: Currency, land crises continue

International recognition of the seriousness of the situation in Zimbabwe is increasingly critical. Churches and religious organizations need to confirm that judgment, making the grave problems there more visible to an oblivious world, according to Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN Habitat.

One year after "Operation Murambatsvina," little has been done to rectify the damaging effects of the government campaign against the urban poor. The courageous report on that situation, issued by UN Habitat's Tibaijuka, is far from implemented, although her agency has established a permanent presence in Harare and is actively advocating for urban land on which to build desperately needed housing for the poor.

In recent months the struggle to survive intensified for the majority in Zimbabwe. Inflation prior to currency devaluation reached 1,183 percent - the world's highest rate, making daily life an overwhelming challenge. The fixed and limited incomes of the majority of people vanished into thin air,

while a few found ways to prosper on the misfortunes of others.

In early August the central bank introduced a new currency to replace the old denominations at a new exchange rate, forcing people to return cash hoarded in homes, offices and outside the country to the formal banking system. Prior to the reforms instituted by Reserve Bank Governor Gideon Gono, only about 12.5 percent of Zimbabwe's circulating currency was passing through its banking system. [UN's Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), August 11]

Gono set an August 21 deadline for exchanging old currency for new, and also adjusted the official exchange rate from Z\$250,000 to one U.S. dollar to Z\$250 to one U.S. dollar.

The problem was that individuals could only exchange Z\$100 million (US\$1,000) daily, in a window period that allowed a maximum of Z\$1.6 billion (US\$16,000) to be exchanged before the new currency comes into effect.

The reforms were launched in tandem with nationwide roadblocks, manned by the police and

youth militia of the ruling ZANU-PF party, who confiscated money from individuals carrying more than Z\$100 million (US\$1,000).

President Robert Mugabe has publicly backed Gono's monetary reforms, but the measures have angered the poor, the middle-class and members of the ruling elite.

According to IRIN (August 11), the roots of the crisis can be traced to the fast-track land reform program that began in 2000 and led to the seizure of white-owned farms. Foreign aid was reduced and stringent borrowing measures were imposed by international financial organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The economic shock was compounded in 2003 when a widespread shortage of cash in banks eroded confidence in the banking system.

The combination of these factors, including the disruption of the agricultural sector, a major foreign currency earner, and President Mugabe's alienation of the West, brought about crippling shortage of foreign currency, basic goods and hyperinflation.

Meanwhile, in late July, Zimbabwe's opposition political parties, churches and civil society groups took a first step in forming a broad alliance to confront the ruling ZANU-PF party. The alliance, dubbed "Save Zimbabwe," invited a cross-section of Zimbabwean society to debate the best way forward to end the political and economic crises facing the country. ZANU-PF was invited but did not attend.

Morgan Tsvangirai, president of the anti-sen-

ate faction of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), and Prof Arthur Mutambara, president of the pro-senate faction, met in public for the first time since the MDC split over support for the reconstitution of the senate in 2005. They pledged to forge an alliance to unseat the ruling party. Zimbabwe is provisionally set to hold presidential elections in 2008. The two leaders were joined by the presidents of other political parties, who have promised to form a united front.

The convention passed resolutions on the need to form a unified broad-based platform in the fight for democracy; the urgent need to come up with a new constitution; the adoption of a democracy charter ensuring equality among all Zimbabweans; the need to engage regional and international organizations in creating a better understanding of the Zimbabwean crises, with a roadmap for forcing the government to the negotiating table.

Shortly thereafter, according to *The Zimbabwean*, a paper produced by journalists in exile, Methodist Church Bishop Levee Kadenge and two other pastors in the Christian Alliance (CA), convenors of the Save Zimbabwe coalition, were arrested and detained, along with newspaper columnist and fellow CA member Pius Wakatama. Wakatama said they were detained for two hours at the Harare Central Police Station and urged to "work closely with some bishops who are supportive of the government's policies."

DRC: Elections combat legacy of colonialism

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) will hold a run-off election on October 29 between incumbent President Joseph Kabila and former rebel leader Jean-Pierre Bemba, neither of whom amassed the 50 percent-plus-one vote required to declare victory.

The DRC's general elections held on July 30 were the country's first since Patrice Lumumba became prime minister in 1960. Beginning with his murder a year later, followed by a coup in 1965 staged by Mobutu Sese Seko, who introduced a one-party system, the past 45 years have witnessed the systematic impoverishment of one of the potentially wealthiest countries on the African continent. The DRC ranks 167 out of 177 in the 2005 United

Nations Development Program's (UNDP) human development index. [UN's Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) July 24]

But the historical roots of the long-term crisis in the DRC and the horrific consequences for the Congolese people fail to command sufficient global attention. A letter from World Council of Churches General Secretary Dr. Samuel Kobia to WCC member churches in the DRC just prior to the elections tells the story well. Excerpts follow:

"I still recall with outrage, the question *The Economist* posed at the beginning of the millennium, 'Does Africa have some inherent character flaw that keeps it backward and incapable of development?' (May 13, 2000) This is used as vindication of the killing fields in the Congo by those who see the only

solution to Africa's predicament as liberation of the continent into the globalized 'democratic' ambient of Europe and America.

"On Christmas Day 1999, Archbishop Emmanuel Kataliko, the then Roman Catholic bishop of Bukavu in the eastern region, answered these absurd arguments when he spoke of myths surrounding Congo's history. He called the fighting a human catastrophe linked to globalization, profit and western manipulation and complicity.

"Foreign powers, with the collaboration of some of our Congolese brothers, organize wars over control of the resources of our country. These resources, which should be used for our development, for the education of our children, to cure our illnesses, in short so that we can have a more decent human life, serve only to kill us. What is more, our country and our people have become the object of exploitation. All that has value is pillaged and taken to foreign countries or simply destroyed...."

"Several days later the archbishop, who was also vice president of the Congo's Episcopal Conference, was deported from his diocese by the rebel group controlling the region and spent seven months in exile in North Kivu. Upon his return to Bukavu he took up his duties but shortly thereafter died of a heart attack at age 68 while on an official visit to the Vatican in October 2000.

"His description of the Congo was courageous and honest.

"... [P]erhaps we need to look more deeply into the origins of Congo's travail and the role of western capitalism in its lifetime of foreign rule. In fact Congolese were victims of the greatest genocide the world has ever known during its colonial (Belgian) period and that history, too, has been virtually erased.

"Americans and Europeans are accustomed to thinking of fascism and communism as the twin evils of the 20th century but the century has really been home to three great totalitarian systems—fascism, communism and colonialism—the latter practiced at its most deadly in Africa. The West doesn't want to recognize this because they were complicit in it. Countries that were democratic in Europe conducted mass murder in Africa—with little or no protest from the U.S.

"After the country achieved independence in 1960, it reeled from one tragic situation to the next: the assassination of Lumumba, the three-decades-long dictatorship, and the 1994 genocide in Rwanda that spilled over into the Congo, the war that led to the overthrow of Mobutu by Laurent Kabila, his murder and then the second great war that has never really ended despite a 2003 ceasefire.

"For some 80 years under King Leopold and the Belgian colonial administration, Congo was plundered, for the profit of those overseas. No one should be surprised that this was followed by more decades of plunder, at the hands of Mobutu and the multinational corporations he was in league with. And we should not forget the devastation wrought by slavery for centuries before then. Democracy is a fragile plant under the best of circumstances, and none of the Congo's heritage has been fertile soil for it to grow in.

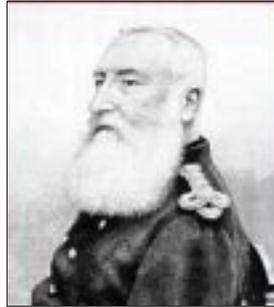
"The war between African nations for Congo's wealth raged from 1998 to 2003....

"Ask anyone in places like Kisingani, Bunia, Goma or Bukavu why seven African armies fought two wars in the last decade or so, and they will tell you it is a war of plunder, loot and exploitation. Many of the armies have now gone home but the suffering of the people continues. War is ever-present. But even deadlier now are the side effects of war, the scars left by the brutality that disfigure Congo's society and infrastructure. Plagued by bad sanitation, disease, malnutrition and dislocation... . For every violent death in Eastern Congo's war zone, there are 62 nonviolent deaths according to Doctors Without Borders: treatable diseases like malaria, meningitis, measles, AIDS. ...

"There is enormous global competition for Congo's resources, its soils packed with diamonds, gold copper, cobalt, uranium and tantalum (or coltan as it is known locally, used in cell phones and computers). The waters of the Congo's mighty rivers could power the continent. Its soil is lush and fertile, its tropical forests cover an area bigger than Great Britain.

"Yet it is this very wealth that Archbishop Kataliko prophesied so accurately that was at the heart of Congo's desperation... . We must not allow the indifference of centuries of oppression and exploitation to continue."

Full text available at <http://www.oikoumene.org/index.php?id=2354>.



King Leopold II of Belgium

Brazil: Campaign fights privatization, corruption

The privatizations of Brazil's governmental industries and services during the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1994-2002) were some of the worst examples of corruption in that nation's history. However, a recent court decision may lead to a reexamination of the privatization of the Vale do Rio Doce corporation (Sweet Water Valley), a strategic mineral company, seen by many as perhaps the worst of all the privatizations. Participants in a public campaign for the re-nationalization of the Vale do Rio Doce include dozens of social movements and networks as well as members of the Brazilian Congress. The campaign aims to mobilize the country in defense of an asset that they feel should never have been privatized and should be returned to the hands of the people.

The Vale do Rio Doce corporation was sold on May 6, 1997 for the ludicrous sum of R\$3,338,178,240 (US\$1.3 billion). Merrill Lynch, hired to assess the value of the company before the auction, severely underestimated its worth and only considered its stock value without considering all of its valuable minerals and infrastructure. Some of the assets ignored in its 1997 sales price included 54 different interlinked companies, proven reserves of 41 billion tons of iron, 11 percent of the world's bauxite reserves, billions of tons of reserves in other minerals, 1,800 kilometers of railroads, port terminals and 580,000 hectares of replanted forests, sufficient to produce 400,000 tons per year of cellulose. According to a female Congressional representative popularly known as Doctor Clair, "Just its 2005 profits are estimated at \$5 billion..." Citing numbers given by the company's financial director at the time of the sale, she said, "[T]he company was worth \$40 billion."

Legislators note with concern that Merrill Lynch, which seriously miscalculated the company's worth, was part owner of Anglo American, a direct competitor to the Vale do Rio Doce company at the time. In addition, Anglo American participated in the auction through the company Projeta Consultoria Financeira, S/C, breaking federal laws in the process.

Another significant but overlooked fact in 1997 was that, according to Aloysio Biondi in his investigative book, *O Brasil Endividado*, (Indebted Brazil) the Vale do Rio Doce company was turned over with R\$700 million (US\$280 million) on hand. In the first

three years, profits averaged US\$400,000,000, allowing Benjamin Steinbruch, the Brazilian investor who bought the company, to pay off his debt in only three years.

Another critical issue for many was that over 26 million hectares of land were internationalized in the sale. Brazilian military code prohibits the internationalization of more than 2,000 hectares without Congressional approval, which did not happen in this case. The sale also interfered with national security measures which require that only the State can mine uranium, which has been found in some of Vale do Rio Doce's mineral deposits. Socorro Gomes, a national representative on the campaign to de-privatize Vale do Rio Doce, complains that the current owner is selling uranium along with copper and gold.

One of the reasons given to sell state-run industries such as Vale do Rio Doce was to use the money to pay towards the principal of public debts. Unfortunately, these sales had little to no effect on overall debt. Despite privatizing 70 percent of state-run companies, which generated US\$24 billion, the internal public debt grew from US\$43.2 billion to US\$261.6 billion between 1995 and 2002. In the same period, the external debt grew from US\$148.2 billion to US\$227.6 billion.

Many who supported privatizing the Vale do Rio Doce company argued that it should be sold due to inefficiency and costliness. But Representative Gomes questions this logic, noting that, since 1990, the company received no public funds yet was profitable until 1996. Then in 1997, months before the sale, the government invested US\$1.24 billion in the company and received US\$1.41 billion in return. Since 1970, the company had averaged 13.6 percent annual growth.

Due to these above-cited suspicions around the sale of the Vale do Rio Doce company, more than 100 lawsuits were filed to stop the sale in 1997, yet all were unsuccessful. In 2002, Judge Francisco de Assis Castro ruled the suits unworthy (paradoxically, as the sale had already taken place) and annulled them. However, in October 2005 Judge Selene Maria de Alemeida "resuscitated" the cases by overriding the annulment made by Judge Assis and allowing for the lawsuits to continue.

The Vale do Rio Doce Corporation recently announced interest in buying controlling shares in a

Canadian mining firm, Inco, for US\$17.8 billion. If the deal goes through, Vale do Rio Doce's stocks will jump from US\$59.8 billion to US\$77 billion, making it the second largest mining corporation in the world. Currently, the company is responsible for close to 39 percent of Brazil's international trade. In the state of Para, the company represents 30 percent of the state's GDP.

The struggle continues to see if all of this wealth should be directed to the people, or should remain in private hands for personal profit. It took the Brazilian people over 50 years to build the Vale do Rio Doce company to be the mining powerhouse that it was in 1997, only to see it given away for the price of bananas. It remains to be seen if they will be successful in getting it back.

Mexico: Election fraud, corruption claims

Recent charges of election fraud, combined with deep frustration for years of political corruption, have led Mexico to the brink of revolt. Legal challenges have been filed and public demonstrations have been held protesting the official results of the July 2 presidential election, which showed an extremely narrow difference between the two front candidates. Meanwhile, similar crises are breaking out in southern states like Chiapas, where the election for governor appears to be fraudulent, and in Oaxaca, where huge protests have demanded the resignation of Gov. Ulises Ruiz Ortiz. Many observers doubt that a decision about the presidency, expected by September 6, will calm civil unrest. Mexico's people are tired of the usual corruption that passes for politics here, and heavy-handed responses by government officials only stoke the fire.

Shortly after the presidential elections, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, lodged a 900-page complaint to the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) detailing known instances of electoral fraud that had taken place throughout Mexico, instigated principally by the campaign for Felipe Calderón, the candidate of the National Action Party (PAN). Despite announcements to the contrary in the international press, a winner has not been determined, and an investigation into election fraud has begun with ample evidence.

Perhaps the PRD's strongest case for a recount comes from the fact that ballots in almost one-third of the country were not tallied in the presence of independent observers. One analysis of the IFE results found 2,366 polling places where only a PAN observer was present. In these districts, Calderón beat López Obrador by a whopping 71-21 margin. According to the complaint, several ballot boxes full of votes were found in dumps in Mexico City, López

Obrador's stronghold. Also, at numerous polling sites in PAN-dominated regions, the number of votes cast vastly exceeded the number of registered voters. Election officials were even filmed stuffing ballot boxes, though at least some of these videos seem to show legal redistributions of misplaced ballots.

Evidence also exists that both computers and humans shaved off small amounts from ballot box results; cumulatively, these alterations were significant in a race determined by an average of two votes per ballot box. In addition, López Obrador also accused the IFE of hiding 3.3 million votes from the final tally. After two days of denial, the IFE finally "discovered" 2.5 million votes which reduced Calderón's disputed victory by 145,000, to around 257,000 votes, or 0.6 percent of the vote.

The Federal Electoral Tribunal (TEPJF) did a partial recount of nine percent of the votes in early August which showed that 126,282 votes were stolen or added in illegally. Interestingly, both sides have claimed victory from the partial recount. Calderón says the difference is not enough to change the result of the vote, but López Obrador points out that if these numbers are extrapolated to the whole country, it would mean that over 1.5 million votes were stolen or stuffed in an election supposedly won by 250,000 votes.

In Oaxaca, what began as a yearly protest by teachers for increased spending on education has grown into a state-wide movement to remove the governor, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz, after he violently repressed the teachers in an early morning attack on June 14. Helicopters fired tear gas and more than 1,000 police officers raided the teachers' encampment, viciously expelled the 600 people there and burned all of their belongings. Shortly after dawn, the teachers regrouped with others to a crowd of around 30,000 who returned to the encampment in the town center (the Zócolo) with rocks and sticks

and kicked out the police.

Since then, the people's movement has grown in size and organization. On June 16, the first of five marches with 300,000-500,000 protestors each was held. Dissatisfaction with Ruiz Ortiz had great consequences in the national elections, as for the first time since 1929 the PRI did not win the presidential vote in Oaxaca. Three days after the elections, the teachers and allies met to establish the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca (APPO), which they declared to be the governing body of the state with the goal of removing Ruiz Ortiz from power.

Mexican law does not have a mechanism to remove unpopular politicians except when an area is declared "ungovernable" and the governor must step down or be removed by the Congress. Therefore, in addition to occupying the central square with their encampment, the APPO began to occupy other areas of Oaxaca, including setting up encampments in front of every major state office buildings, which have been closed ever since. The governor and parts of his government now work out of different hotels on the outskirts of the city, and at the moment, it seems doubtful that the governor is living in the state at all.

Members of APPO have occupied 10 radio stations as well as a TV station; the famous Guelagueta celebration, which normally brings in hundreds of thousands of tourists and provides a huge percentage of merchants' yearly incomes, has been cancelled. Public transportation operates sporadically, trash collection has stopped in many areas and public, as well as some private, schools are not operating. The APPO is clear that all of this will continue until the governor steps down, though he has given no indication that he is willing to do so. Clearly the situation will worsen before it improves. Dozens of cars and buses have been burned and at least two people have been killed, one by bands of gunmen that nightly ride the streets and that demonstrators are convinced are under orders from the governor and city officials. Dozens more have been injured and/or disappeared as of August 24.

Another increasingly touchy situation is in the neighboring state of Chiapas. State elections took place on August 20 with results similar to the presidential vote. Primary results showed the PRD candidate leading a coalition of the PRI and PAN by only 2,300 votes (0.2 percent). Similar charges of fraud have been made, except that in Chiapas, contrary to the national dispute, it is the PAN



Sign on closed school in Oaxaca; photo from Indymedia.org

accusing the PRD of stuffing ballots and throwing out legitimate votes, while the PRD levels similar accusations against PAN. In this case, however, López Obrador backs a total recount of the votes if PAN and PRI should demand it.

The decision regarding the presidential vote should be announced by September 6. Based on its investigations, the IFE can either declare a new president or annul the elections, which would mean that Congress would choose an interim president and new elections would take place within two years. In at least two earlier cases, the same judges currently sitting on the IFE have annulled fraudulent elections for governor. If Calderón is declared president without a full recount, he will be guaranteed a difficult mandate, as López Obrador has announced that the protests could continue for years.

While many similarities exist between Mexico's 2006 election and the U.S.'s 2000 election, there is one crucial difference – the response of the people. The diverse popular movement begun by López Obrador has made it clear that even if the election is given to Calderón, the people will continue to mobilize. An alternative Democratic Convention in Mexico City is planned to begin September 16, in which participants will "decide, with representatives from all of the peoples of the country, the role that we will assume in the public life of Mexico given the current circumstances." In a recent rally, López Obrador said, "Power is in the people, not in the palaces, offices, consultants or hired guns." This message is gathering more and more supporters throughout the country and foretells of times of change in Mexico.

Good Oaxaca sources in English: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/oaxacastudyactiongroup/> and www.narconews.org

Bolivia: Pressure builds to return Goni

The following article was written by Maggie Fogarty, a Maryknoll lay missioner who lives in Bolivia.

On October 17, 2003, Bolivia's then President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada ("Goni") boarded a U.S.-provided helicopter to escape the country that was crying for his resignation. As his flight left the ground, he might have seen the campesina women dressed in black, mourning the deaths of their family members, some of the 67 killed when Sanchez de Lozada sent out tanks and armed soldiers in a failed attempt to undo a social revolution. More than 400 people were wounded during the street battles in October 2003.

Chevy Chase, MD, a suburb of Washington, D.C., where Goni has lived since fleeing Bolivia, is far from the news of the families of people like Marlene Nancy Rojas, a seven-year old girl who was shot by a soldier in the small pueblo of Warisata, and Alex Llusco Mollericona, the five-year old boy who went to his window and was killed by a soldier firing indiscriminately into the crowd.

Three hundred thousand people, the overwhelming majority of them indigenous, had been arriving for weeks to Bolivia's capital city of La Paz from small farming communities, mining villages and barrios, filling the streets and the air with one cry: "Basta!" "Enough!" Their demand was a simple one: that the government protect the natural resources of their country. The popular movement had been building for some time, but came to a head in September and October 2003 when the Sanchez de Lozada government announced its plans to export Bolivia's natural gas to the U.S. via a port in Chile. Bolivia's people could not allow their natural riches to be sold off once again at prices which benefited only foreign companies and Bolivia's wealthy elite, not while Bolivia continued to be the most impoverished country in South America.

Sanchez de Lozada and his ministers had made it clear that their government would not consider engaging in dialogue with the Bolivian people regarding decisions which affected the national interest. In anticipation of the mobilizations sure to arise from the natural gas plan, the government implemented a Law of Citizen Security in August 2003 to heighten penalties for common forms of political

protest. That October, Goni told the military to do whatever was necessary to stop the protests, which resulted in the infamous massacre. (See *NewsNotes*, November/December 2003.)

It has been almost three years since Sanchez de Lozada and two of his ministers, Carlos Sanchez Berzain and Jorge Berindoague, escaped to the U.S. Impunity for these men undercuts the hope most Bolivians otherwise feel with the election last December of President Evo Morales, an Aymara indigenous leader who was brought to power by the very social movements which ousted Sanchez de Lozada and his government. The family members of the dead and the wounded look to the United States for cooperation in the trial against Sanchez de Lozada and his ministers.

On June 22, 2005, the U.S. State Department received a formal request from the Bolivian government, approved by a two-thirds vote of the Bolivian Congress, which was dominated by Goni's party, as well as the Supreme Court, asking that Sanchez de Lozada, Berzain and Berindoague be notified of the trial which has begun to investigate the massacre of October 2003. Once the men are notified, they have a certain number of days to return to Bolivia for the trial, or extradition proceedings will begin against them. Until these men are notified, however, the trial against them is in limbo. For well over a year now, the U.S. government has neither acted on this request for notification, nor responded to the Bolivian government as to its intentions.

Faith in action:

Bolivians who want to see justice done for those massacred as they marched in defense of Bolivia's natural resources, are asking U.S. citizens to put pressure on the U.S. government to notify Sanchez de Lozada, Berzain and Berindoague of their trial. As a sign of your support of political freedom, an end to impunity, and the right of all people to live with dignity, contact your members of Congress, and send an electronic letter to President Bush (<http://www.juiciogoniya.org.bo>), urging him to fulfill this simple request so that justice can be done.

For more information on the case against Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, and the struggle for justice and an end to impunity in Bolivia, go to <http://www.boliviasolidarity.org>, and <http://juiciogoniya.free.fr>



Multicolored flag of Aymara people of Bolivia

Costa Rica: Little support for CAFTA

The Costa Rican campaign to oppose CAFTA has perhaps been the most effective among the six countries slated to sign the trade pact. As of this writing, Costa Rica is the only country not to have ratified CAFTA. In fact, it is unlikely that it will ratify until some time in 2007, if at all. Some say that Costa Rica has the most to lose by joining CAFTA, as it has not implemented neoliberal reforms to the extent of the other countries involved, so the changes inflicted by the accord will be more drastic. At the same time, some argue that it has the most to gain from CAFTA with its more highly educated workforce and the fact that it is less dependent on agricultural production than the others. The majority of Costa Rican civil society, though, is clear that CAFTA will be more harmful than beneficial, and has been very vocal in opposition to the accord.

The presidential elections in February 2006 perhaps most clearly show the level of concern with CAFTA. Former President Oscar Arias was favored to win by up to 20 percent of the vote leading up to the election, but ended up almost losing to Ottón Solís whose campaign was heavily focused on the dangers of CAFTA and the need for its renegotiation. Only after two weeks of recounting votes was it determined that Arias won with 40.9 percent of the vote compared to Solís' 38.9 percent.

The main concern with CAFTA for many Costa Ricans is that it will dismantle their unique state-led model of development based on social security and solidarity. Despite recent increases in income inequality, Costa Rica remains very egalitarian compared to the rest of Latin America, and is the longest-running democracy in the region – since 1949. After a five-week revolution in 1948, the revolutionary leader, José María Figueres, established a temporary government that granted the right to vote to women and full citizenship to blacks. They also abolished the army, transferring the military funds to education and health. Figueres nationalized the banking system and endowed the new state with the authority to guide the economy through policies aimed at benefiting the most vulnerable in Costa Rican society. The result of these changes, many of which continue to be in effect today, is a country with a life expectancy of 77 years and GDP per capita of \$11,100 – compare this to 69 years and \$4,700 in Guatemala, 71 years and \$4,700 in El Salvador, and 70 years and \$2,900 in Nicaragua.

The fear is that many policies that have been so successful would be impossible to continue were Costa Rica to become a member of CAFTA. For example, the social security system (CCSS) currently provides universal health care, but would be forced to change due to intellectual property provisions that prohibit the purchase of lower price generic medicines and services requirements that would limit government's ability to guarantee access to all.

As in most countries, another concern is the effect of CAFTA on rural communities. Rice production is an especially worrisome area for many as it is the basic food staple for Costa Ricans, particularly poor people. While there is little consensus on what will happen after joining CAFTA, all agree that the rice industry probably would not survive competition from subsidized rice from the U.S. They fear results similar to what occurred in Mexico after it entered NAFTA in 1994. Prices for Mexico's raw corn plummeted, driving millions of corn farmers from their land, while the price of corn tortillas skyrocketed due to the end of government subsidies that had been in place to guarantee a cheap food staple for the poorest Mexicans. Costa Rica already imports at least 100,000 metric tons of rice per year while producing over 250,000 tons. In CAFTA, those numbers are sure to reverse, resulting in the loss of livelihoods for thousands of small farmers.

Insurance, telecommunications, electricity distribution, petroleum distribution, potable water, sewage, and railroad transportation industries are all state-run in Costa Rica. It was because of demands for their liberalization, especially telecommunications and insurance, that Costa Rica briefly withdrew from the CAFTA negotiations in December 2003. The Costa Rican Electricity Institute (ICE), which controls most of the communications and electricity sectors, including everything from power lines to Internet connections, and employs hundreds of thousands of workers, will most assuredly be split up and privatized under CAFTA rules. If ICE and other state-run industries are privatized, there will be large scale layoffs and access for the poorest Costa Ricans will be put in jeopardy.

Costa Rica's Congress will not ratify CAFTA until December 2006 at the earliest. Its passing depends first on the passage of two bills that will privatize the telecommunications and insurance industries. While the CAFTA ratification requires only a simple majority vote, both these bills need a two-

thirds vote that is required for any bill related to the privatization of state industries. Ottón Solís said in an interview that the anti-CAFTA coalition in the Costa Rican Congress is one vote shy of preventing the two-thirds vote for the telecommunications bill. When the bills come before Congress, most likely in December, the National Committee of Networks (CNE), which articulates the various civil society organizations against CAFTA, will promote massive

protests aiming to influence the vote in Congress.

These votes will be historic ones for Costa Rica. Will the country be able to continue with its relatively successful alternative model of development that has brought about the longest-lasting democracy in the region and a more vibrant middle class? Or will it adopt radical changes in its economy to become more like the rest of the region with more severe income inequalities and fragile democracies?

No More CAFTAs pledge campaign

Social movements in the U.S. have introduced a new initiative in the debate over trade policy with the launching of the "No More CAFTAs" pledge campaign. The campaign aims to get members of Congress and candidates for both houses to promise to support only trade agreements that include certain provisions aimed at protecting workers, farmers, vulnerable populations and guarantee that governments are still allowed flexibility in forming development policies.

When asked to vote against the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), many members of Congress responded by asking what type of trade agreement they should vote for. The No More CAFTAs pledge was formulated to show how trade agreements can be modified to be more beneficial to larger parts of society.

Perhaps the most important pledge is the first, which calls for more transparency and participation in the negotiations. Until now, there has been minimal disclosure of the content and dynamics of trade agreements. Even Congress has been out of the loop, with only the Congressional Oversight Group being given closed briefings on the negotiations. Negotiations not only must be more transparent, they should include more input from non-business sectors of society. Until now, trade advisory panels have been almost exclusively from large corporations. The campaign calls on the U.S. to follow other countries, like Brazil, that include civil society representatives as part of their official delegation, thus assuring increased transparency and participation.

The pledge also calls for trade agreements to leave debt out of national treatment provisions so as to allow future renegotiations of debt. Recent agreements like the U.S.–Chile Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and CAFTA have expanded investments to

include sovereign debt, which will severely restrict governments' ability to react to financial crises. It is important that future agreements do not restrict governments in such an important area.

Ask your member of Congress and candidates for the House and Senate to take the Pledge for Trade Justice. The pledge can be found on the Stop CAFTA website (www.stopcafta.org).

No More CAFTAs Pledge

I will only support trade agreements that include:

- 1) Democratic participation, accountability and transparency during trade negotiations;
- 2) Provisions that work to protect the dignified lives of small farmers, indigenous communities, women and otherwise vulnerable populations;
- 3) Text in the body of the agreements guaranteeing that core labor and environmental standards are strengthened, as defined by international law;
- 4) Space for national governments to pursue development strategies that support sustainable, locally-determined economic, social and environmental priorities;
- 5) Provisions permitting debt cancellation and aid to be used in direct service to the poor to help close the gaps between and within rich and poor countries;
- 6) A framework that focuses finance and investment on productive, long-term development that ensures economic security and sustainable use of resources;
- 7) A guarantee that public services like health care, education and potable water will remain public and accessible to poor communities; and
- 8) International trade and investment systems that emphasize fundamental human rights, in order to eclipse violence and oppression.

Peru: Camisea pipeline

The following article was written by Benjamin Smyth, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

In September 2003, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) approved a \$75 million direct loan to help fund the initial phase of the Camisea Natural Gas Project, the first project of its kind in the Peruvian Amazon. Focused on "Block 88" in the Amazon's lower Urubamba Valley, the \$1.6 billion project called for the construction of four drilling platforms along with two parallel pipelines (one for natural gas and the other for liquid natural gas) stretching for 340 miles from the extraction site in the Amazon over the Andes to the coast. In addition, the plan consisted of the development of a gas distribution network and export facility in Lima and Callao. Once at the coast, the natural gas would be processed for use in Peru, and eventually shipped to markets in Mexico and the U.S.

One of the largest natural gas extraction, transportation, and exporting projects in Latin America, the Camisea pipeline is operated by Transportadora de Gas del Peru (TGP). TGP represents a consortium of companies including Texas-based Hunt Oil, Algeria's Sonatrach, Argentina's Pluspetrol and Techint, and the South Korean SK Corporation. From the beginning, supporters of the project argued that it would offer Peru a chance to distinguish itself in the petrochemical industry, provide cheaper electricity to Peruvian homes, decrease hydrocarbon imports and increase its exports. In addition, a portion of the royalties were promised to be distributed for investment in further development and infrastructure, in particular for the Cuzco region where Block 88 is located. However, since its beginning, the project has received an abundance of criticism from non-government organizations, indigenous organizations, human rights groups, and other governments for its negative environmental and social impact. (See *NewsNotes*, January/February 2003.)

A primary concern has been the location of Block 88 and the pipeline's route to the coast. An ecologically diverse and pristine section of the Amazon jungle, Block 88 includes part of a state preserve for indigenous people. The lower Urubamba Valley is home to some of the Amazon's last remaining isolated indigenous communities. According to

Amazon Watch, approximately 22 indigenous communities living in intermittent contact with outsiders and several small farming communities have suffered negative impacts from the construction and operation of the pipeline, including dwindling supplies of fish and local game, landslides and erosion, and infectious diseases. Furthermore, it is feared that the project and its construction will attract new waves of migrants, loggers, and developers into the forest, only intensifying the environmental degradation and social stresses on the indigenous communities.

Confirming many people's worst fears, the Camisea project has already proven to be unreliable and dangerous. Since August 2004, when it became operational, the pipeline has experienced five major leaks. In a March 2006 investigation into the faulty pipeline, E-Tech International, a non-profit technical research organization, concluded that the spills into ecologically sensitive areas were caused by the use of substandard building materials and haphazard construction. As a result of the frequent leaks and the E-Tech report, the Peruvian government and the IDB are conducting audits on the pipeline itself and on the environmental and social costs, respectively.

Despite the numerous leaks and ongoing audits, the IDB has entered into the due diligence process, which signals the possibility of awarding an additional \$400 million loan for the second phase of the Camisea project, which would include export infrastructure on the Peruvian coast. However, the IDB's decision has incensed many people, including U.S. senators. In July, as part of its attempt to curb mismanagement of funds provided by multinational development banks for infrastructure construction, the U.S. Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations held a hearing on the Camisea project. In his opening remarks, committee chair Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IN) raised concerns, stating, "Five spills have occurred in the natural gas liquids pipeline, and some non-governmental organizations have complained that local people have not seen the benefits from the gas royalties, a portion of which is earmarked for Peru's military." During the hearing, Herrera Descalzi, Peru's former minister of Energy and Mines, said, "One out of four people in Peru is not getting electricity and the promise of Camisea to deliver services to the poor has not been met."

Without respect for the rights of the indigenous peoples and laws protecting them (including the International Labor Organization's Convention 169 and the American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples) and proper procedures that will ensure environmental integrity, the Camisea project remains dangerous and irresponsible. The National Council of Churches' Public Land Stewardship Initiative, "Renewing the Ground: A Call for Faithful Stewardship of Energy Resources on God's Land," includes the following principles to remember when considering good stewardship: 1) There is a moral responsibility to maintain some lands in a pristine state; 2) all lands should be treated with respect; and 3) prudence must be exercised when making decisions about energy development on public lands.

Faith in action:

If one of your senators is a member of the Committee on Foreign Relations, please contact

him/her to express concern about the Camisea pipeline and the damage it is causing to the environment and peoples of the Amazon. Members of the Committee are: Lamar Alexander (TN), George Allen (VA), Joe Biden (DE), Barbara Boxer (CA), Lincoln Chafee (RI), Norm Coleman (MN), Christopher Dodd (CT), Russell Feingold (WI), Chuck Hagel (NE), John Kerry (MA), Dick Lugar (IN), Mel Martinez (FL), Lisa Murkowski (AK), Bill Nelson (FL), Barack Obama (IL), Paul Sarbanes (MD), John Sununu (NH), and George Voinovich (OH).

To learn more about the Camisea project, visit the following websites: Amazon Alliance, www.amazonalliance.org, Bank Information Center USA, www.bicusa.org/bicusa/issues/camisea_natural_gas_project_peru/index.php, Amazon Watch, www.amazonwatch.org, or E-Tech International, www.etechninternational.org/projects.htm.

Haiti: Hope or no hope?

"The situation - my mood - my level of hope - often depends on whether I am focusing on the political situation or looking through a more local optic," wrote Renate Schneider, a Maryknoll Affiliate living in Haiti.

She continued, "...[L]ooking at things through the local lens still gives me hope. The University of Fondwa is progressing, despite enormous difficulties, and is preparing to receive a second group of students this September. Students at a small university in Jeremie have established an elementary school for children of peasants, children who otherwise would not go to school.

"In the free trade zone, workers at the Couronne/Coca-Cola bottling plant are organizing a union, demanding fair treatment and wages.

"The chauffeurs' union in the other border area ('la plaine' in a city called 'Malpasse') has been on strike for several weeks. They are striking because of the violence at the border area to which the Haitian Police and MINUSTAH [the UN's stabilization mission in Haiti] are not adequately responding.

"There is also another movement - largely university students, but also progressive think-tank organizations and NGOs - protesting the high cost of living ('lavi che'). They are calling on [President

Rene] Preval to lower gas prices now that Venezuela's [President Hugo] Chavez has agreed to sell Haiti cheaper gasoline than multinational corporations."

On July 25, an "international donors" conference was held at Hotel Karibe Convention Center in Port au Prince. Multinational and bilateral donors pledged \$750 million in grants and loans for the next 14 months. Some of this aid - \$120 million - will go to a "Social Appeasement Plan" that includes severance pay for former Army members and public employees laid off during the interim period. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) also made gestures toward limited, conditioned debt relief. (See *NewsNotes* July/August 2006)

Those Haitians protesting the outcome of the donors' conference criticized the plan as too similar to an interim plan in which there was no real space for citizen dialogue and the emphasis was on neoliberal macroeconomic policies. An alternative plan for long-term, sustainable development that centers on national production rather than production for export is under construction by civil society groups.

Meanwhile, in an attempt to find out what happened to funds earmarked for Haiti years ago, the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human

Rights asked a U.S. federal court to order the U.S. Treasury Department to reveal records of its role in suspending loans destined for vital public health projects in Haiti. The RFK Center filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request almost three years ago seeking correspondence and documents related to Treasury's intervention with the IDB on infrastructure loans to Haiti. After Treasury's intervention, the IDB made an unprecedented about-face, and refused to disburse loans previously approved for Haiti in 2001.

Despite repeated requests and modifications of RFK Center's FOIA request, the Treasury Department has not provided a single document in three years.

In July 1998, the IDB approved \$145.9 million in loans to Haiti. The money was intended to improve water, sanitation, health, rural roads, and education in Haiti with payment to begin in 2001. However, on April 6, 2001, U.S. Executive Director to the IDB Lawrence Harrington sent a letter to IDB President Enrique V. Iglesias requesting that the loans not be disbursed, leading to the loans' halt. The U.S. Executive Director reports directly to the Treasury Department.

Due to the IDB's unprecedented actions, according to the RFK Center, all too many Haitians have died or become ill due to the lack of potable

water and inadequate healthcare. In particular, women and children have suffered high incidences of death and illness from waterborne diseases.

The recent motion was filed at the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

"The American public has a right to know what role its government is playing behind closed doors," said Monika Kalra Varma, acting director at the RFK Center. "The denial of these loans directly violates Haitians' human rights, leaving them to suffer significant human casualties. If the U.S. blocked life-saving loans to influence Haiti's internal politics, it would be an unconscionable act to which no American would want to attach their nation's good name." Varma continued to insist, "As international financial institutions and donor nations begin publicizing plans to reinvest in Haiti, this information must be made public so that such a destructive and perverse reversal does not happen again."

Faith in action:

If he or she has not already done so, encourage your member of Congress to support H. Res. 888, the Cancel Haiti's Debt Resolution. Introduced by Reps. Maxine Waters (D-CA), Mark Foley (R-FL), Barney Frank (D-MA), Spencer Bachus (R-AL), and Barbara Lee (D-CA), it urges the World Bank, IMF, and IDB to immediately cancel Haiti's debt.

U.S.: Supreme Court rules for detainee rights

On June 28 the Supreme Court turned a new page in the detainee rights debate in the "war on terror" when it ruled in favor of Salim Ahmed Hamdan in the Hamdan vs. Rumsfeld case. The following article was written by Benjamin Smyth, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

Hamdan, a Yemeni national, was captured in Afghanistan and transferred in 2002 to the detention center at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. He was one of the first of only 10 detainees selected by President Bush to receive trial by military commission, a practice established by executive order from the president in November 2001. Soon after meeting with Hamdan, his defense counsel filed a habeas corpus case insisting that the procedures of the military commission were flawed and questioning the president's power

to convene such commissions.

From its beginning, the military commission system received heavy criticism from the human rights community for its explicit denial of due process rights to detainees and its departure from any functioning court system standards. Among the many controversial issues that surrounded the military commissions was that, as a creation of the president, the commissions were intimately enmeshed with the power of the executive branch and, thus, were not independent courts. Other areas of contention lie in the fact that only foreign nationals could be tried by the commissions (a breach of Article 5 of the Convention to Eliminate all Forms of Discrimination), along with the practice of the commissions to limit the right of detainees to choose their own lawyers and the rejection of rights to an independent appeal. Furthermore, secret evidence could be introduced,

including evidence obtained through coercive measures, such as torture or ill-treatment (a clear break with the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment). At the same time, detainees could be excluded from parts of their own trial proceedings. Following the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005, detainees were granted a limited right to appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, which in turn could only decide if the ruling was consistent with the rules of the commission system itself.

While the Supreme Court did not rule on the legality of the ongoing detentions at Guantánamo, the Hamdan decision reminded the administration that it had not been issued a blank check to deal with detainees in the “war on terror.” The ruling itself stated four important points: 1) the administration did not have the authority to create commissions deviating so far from the established procedures without authorization by Congress; 2) the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005 (DTA) did not prevent the Court from hearing the case; 3) the limited right to appeal created by the DTA did not satisfy the right to an independent appeal; and 4) any method of trying detainees must be in line with due process protections set up in the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and the Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.

As a whole, the Geneva Conventions consist of a body of four treaties that form the foundation of international humanitarian and human rights law. Signatory countries, including the United States, are expected to enact laws that would make violations of the conventions a criminal act, punishable as war crimes. Common Article 3 is significant in the debate surrounding Guantánamo because it provides for a minimum standard of care for persons captured during an armed conflict, including the right to a just trial and protection from torture and outrages upon personal dignity. It also assures care for the sick and injured by impartial international humanitarian aid networks, such as the Red Cross/Red Crescent.

However, from the very beginning of the “war on terror” the administration has tried to find loopholes in established national and international laws regarding treatment of prisoners. First, through the



use of secret prisons, extraordinary renditions, or the sending of untried criminal suspects to other countries for detention and interrogation, and the detention center at Guantánamo Bay, the administration has stated that the Geneva Conventions and international laws do not apply to the present situation. A second loophole was created in the language used to classify detainees. For the first time in U.S. history, detainees were designated as illegal combatants rather than prisoners of war. By classifying detainees as illegal combatants the detainees were denied the rights established for prisoners of war by the Geneva Conventions.

In the coming weeks, the debate surrounding the Supreme Court’s decision will likely intensify in Congress. It is essential to demand, as a minimum, that the method decided upon to try detainees uphold Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions in its fullness. Likewise, in order for any trial system to be just, it must be used as an instrument of the truth and due process, not simply as an instrument to seek convictions. The detainees at Guantánamo, whether guilty of any crimes or not, deserve to be recognized as human beings, with inherent rights and dignity afforded to all by the fundamental fact of being created in the image of God. In his June 16 letter to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Orlando’s Bishop Thomas Wenski, chair of the U.S. bishops’ committee on international policy, wrote, “In a time of terrorism and great fear, our individual and collective obligations to respect dignity and human rights, even our worse enemies, gains added importance.”

To see Bishop Wenski’s full letter on the importance of Common Article 3 in the detainee debate go to U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website at: <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/2006Juneletterretorture.pdf>

For more background on the Hamdan case see Amnesty International’s site at: http://denuncetorture.amnestyusa.org/site/c.huITL9MVJxE/b.1977735/k.BC68/Hamdan_v_Rumsfeld_Background.htm

To view the Center for Constitutional Rights’ Report on Torture at Guantánamo go to: http://www.ccr-ny.org/v2/reports/docs/Torture_Report_Final_version.pdf

World Urban Forum: Swelling cities

Drawing some 10,000 participants from over 100 countries, the Third Session of the World Urban Forum, held in Vancouver this summer, underscored the fact that the urban population of poor countries is set to double from two to four billion in the next 30 years.

During the Forum, UN Habitat launched the agency's State of the World's Cities Report 2006/7 that provides concrete data that shows that the world's one billion slum dwellers are more likely to die earlier, experience more hunger and disease, attain less education and have fewer chances of employment than those urban residents who do not reside in a slum.

"For a long time, we suspected that the optimistic picture of cities did not reflect the reality on the ground," said Anna Tibaijuka, UN-Habitat's Executive Director. "This report provides concrete evidence that there are two cities within one city – one part of the urban population that has all the benefits of urban living, and the other part, the slums and squatter settlements, where the poor often live under worse conditions than their rural relatives. It is time that donor agencies and national governments recognized the urban penalty and specifically targeted additional resources to improve the living conditions of slum dwellers."

According to *AfricaFiles* (June 26), the report defines a slum household as a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following: durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions; sufficient living space, which means not more than three people sharing a room; easy access to safe water in sufficient amounts at an affordable price; access to adequate sanitation in the form of a private or a public toilet shared by a reasonable number of people; and lastly, security of tenure that prevents forced evictions.

The report shows remarkable similarities between slums and rural areas in health, education, employment and mortality. It shows how in countries such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Haiti and India, child malnutrition in slums is comparable to that of rural areas. In many sub-Saharan African cities, children living in slums are more likely to die from water-borne and respiratory illnesses than rural children. Women living in slums are also more likely

to contract HIV/AIDS than their rural counterparts.

For example, in Ethiopia, child malnutrition in slums and rural areas is 47 percent and 49 percent respectively, compared with 27 percent in non-slum urban areas. In Brazil and Cote d'Ivoire, child malnutrition is three to four times higher in slums than in non slum-areas. In most sub-Saharan African countries, HIV prevalence is higher in urban areas than in rural areas; in Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia HIV prevalence among urban populations is almost twice that of rural populations. In all countries, women and slum dwellers are disproportionately affected, reflecting a general trend in the region.

The report also debunks some commonly-held beliefs about people living in slums. Contrary to popular perception, young adults living in slums are more likely to have a child, be married or head a household than their counterparts living in non-slum areas.

The report comes at a time when the world is entering a historic urban transition; in 2007, for the first time in history, the world's urban population will exceed the rural population. Most of the world's urban growth – 95 percent – in the next two decades will be absorbed by cities of the developing world, which are least equipped to deal with rapid urbanization. The majority of migrants will be moving to small towns and cities of less than one million inhabitants. Already, more than half of the world's urban population lives in cities of fewer than 500,000 inhabitants, and almost one-fifth lives in cities of between one and five million inhabitants.

As cities grow, so do their slum populations. In many sub-Saharan African cities, the slum population accounts for over 70 percent of the urban population. Slums in Southern Asia, Western Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are growing as fast as the urban population in general. Annual slum and urban growth rates are highest in sub-Saharan Africa, 4.53 percent and 4.58 percent, respectively, nearly twice those of Southern Asia, where slum and urban growth rates are 2.2 percent and 2.89 percent, respectively. Northern Africa is the only region in the developing world where slum growth rates have declined significantly, largely due to the efforts of individual governments to upgrade slums or prevent their formation. Globally, the slum population is set to grow at the rate of 27 million per year in the period 2000-2020.

HIV/AIDS: International AIDS Conference 2006

“By 2031, no one under the age of 50 will be able to remember a world without AIDS,” remarked Dr. Musimbi Kanyoro, General Secretary of the World YWCA, during a plenary speech at the 16th annual International AIDS conference, held August 13-18, 2006 in Toronto. With a welcome by Canadian indigenous leaders to Turtle Island (the indigenous name for North America), this year’s conference was a gathering of more than 25,000 people with one goal in mind: to convince the world that it is past time to deliver on political, economic and social promises made with the goal of ending the HIV/AIDS pandemic. According to the UN Program on HIV/AIDS, 4.1 million new HIV infections were reported in 2005.

Hundreds of panels, skills building sessions, demonstrations and speeches presented new scientific research, prevention methodologies and successful community-based programs. Activists demanded resolution to the lack of health care workers in developing countries, criticized Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper for his absence, and censured Abbott Pharmaceuticals for overpricing Kaleetra, its latest AIDS medicine. Dr. Julio Montaner, head of the British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV-AIDS, stated, “Ninety percent of [HIV/AIDS] drugs are in the north of the world, while 90 percent of the patients are in the south of the world.” Sub-Saharan Africa is home to two-thirds of the world’s HIV/AIDS cases.

Prior to the International Conference, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance sponsored ecumenical and interfaith pre-conferences, both entitled “Faith in Action: Keeping the Promise.” During these three days, it was recognized that faith-based groups have been responding to the pandemic on the community level. Participants were reminded that faith communities had promised: to break the silence, to include people living with HIV at all program levels, to eradicate stigma, and to protect human rights. In addition to actively responding to these vows, participants were challenged to address the underlying causes of HIV (poverty, powerlessness and gender inequity); to demand universal access to education, prevention and treatment; and to improve cooperation between and among interfaith groups, as well as between north and south.

At the International Conference, Dr. Helene Gayle, president and CEO of CARE, pointed out, “We have more resources, more knowledge, more political commitments than ever ... so it is time to assure that promises made are promises kept.” Issues that arose time and again during the week included: the G8’s commitment to achieve universal access to prevention, care and treatment by 2010; the increasing new infections due to people not knowing that they are infected; poverty and gender inequity, human rights violations and trade agreements as driving forces of the pandemic; the absolute necessity of keeping people living with HIV and youth at the forefront and fully involved in the response; and the role of weak infrastructures and lack of political will in fighting this pandemic.

While many advances in treatment options have been developed, and with new drugs in the pipeline, the relationship between treatment and prevention has been specifically re-emphasized. For instance, despite the success of mother-to-child infection protection programs, which could end infant mortality from HIV, 90 percent of the mothers who need these programs are not being reached. Other prevention topics included updates on vaccines, microbicides and male circumcision, as well as an attempt to move the discussion beyond “ABC” (abstinence, being faithful and condoms). Strategies which have met with success include needle exchange programs, but issues of stigma and lack of political will and resources impede their existence in many countries.

For the first time, the conference highlighted vulnerable populations, such as men who have sex with men, injection drug users, mobile and indigenous groups and sex workers. In addition, throughout the week, five key challenges marked the presentations: 1) accelerating research to end the epidemic; 2) expanding and sustaining human resources to step up prevention and treatment; 3) intensifying involvement of affected individual and communities; 4) building new leadership to advance the response; and 5) scaling up lessons from the field.

The final challenge remains with each individual, community and government: to find the way in which we keep our promise to end this pandemic and monitor our institutions and governments in the keeping of their commitments.

Resources

- 1) **People's Peace Initiative:** The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is one of several national Catholic organizations to endorse the People's Peace Initiative, a collaborative effort to articulate the challenges for Catholic peacemaking in the 21st century.

In 2003, as we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the U.S. bishops' peace pastoral, Pax Christi USA issued an invitation to national Catholic organizations and ministries to join in developing a grassroots process of reflection that would lead to the writing of a "people's peace letter." Central to the vision are Jesus' Gospel values and the experiences and insights of marginalized people—especially communities of color, women and the impoverished in the U.S. and around the world. The two components of this initiative include: 1. the writing and publication of a document, based on input from small group reflection processes in parishes and diocese convenings; and 2. an invigoration of the "vocation of peace-making" and strengthening of relationships among Catholic organizations at the local level to further the work of building a more just and peace-filled world.

Our hope is to build a broader, stronger movement for justice and peace within the Catholic community - so urgently needed for our time. To learn more about this process and how you can participate, or to receive a copy of the booklet (\$5 each, 30 pages; check for bulk orders), contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, ogc@maryknoll.org, 202-832-1780.

- 2) **AFJN Annual Conference, October 3-4:** The Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) will host its annual conference at the University of Notre Dame. This year's theme is "Africa's Children: Peril and Promise." Participants will hear a keynote address from Archbishop John Baptist Odama of Gulu, Uganda, as well as commentary from several distinguished panelists. The conference will feature a panel discussion along with workshops facilitated by our guests on education, street children, children with HIV/AIDS, child trafficking, advocacy and campus organizing. Please join our guests will all share their experiences of working with children in Africa and the challenges of the future.

Registration fee is waived for students, and free dormitory housing will be made available for students who contact the AFJN office. Sacred Heart Parish Center, across the lake from Notre Dame, is offering significantly reduced room rates for individuals of limited income. Please contact the AFJN office for details. To register, contact AFJN at (202)884-9780; fax (202)884-9774; afjn@afjn.org; www.afjn.org

- 3) **Annual vigil to close WHINSEC/School of the Americas, November 17-19:** The SOA Watch campaign achieved a significant victory in June 2005, when 188 members of Congress voted to cut funding to the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), formerly known as the U.S. Army's School of the Americas (SOA). Graduates of the U.S.-taxpayer funded school include many of the most violent military leaders in Latin America. Over the course of several decades, these leaders have used repressive and brutal techniques to control their populations and silence human rights workers, including the four U.S. women religious (including two Maryknoll sisters) murdered in El Salvador in 1980. This year's annual vigil at the gates of Ft. Benning, GA, where the school is located, will be held November 17-19. For more information about the vigil, including transportation and housing options, visit SOA Watch's website at www.soaw.org.
- 4) **Church Toolkit for Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking:** In May, 2006 Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) introduced this new resource for churches. The toolkit is designed to provide resources and guidance on how to approach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a local church setting. The toolkit is part of an increased effort by CMEP to equip local churches and activists with tools to engage in peacemaking efforts in their communities. It is arranged by three topic areas or stages around which activities can be planned including: awareness-building, education and engagement in advocacy. CMEP encourages church activists and leadership to download the toolkit and use it to augment current activities or to begin new initiatives. Churches for Middle East Peace, (202)543-1222; www.cmep.org