



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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

November-December 2018
Vol. 43, No. 6

World AIDS Day: Challenges to 'Know Your Status'	3
UN General Assembly: Shared responsibilities	4
Strategic dismantling of U.S. refugee program	5
Trade: Will the 'new NAFTA' promote justice?	6
Urgent call for climate action and post-growth economy	6
Fossil fuel divestment: Addressing critiques	7
Palm oil: Addressing negative impacts	8
DHUMA receives Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award	9
Israel/Palestine: Protecting Palestinian village	10
El Salvador: Celebration of St. Óscar Romero	11
Uganda: Rising calls for political change	12
Resources	13

Published by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns: Peace, Social Justice & Integrity of Creation

200 New York Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20001

Phone: (202)832-1780 Fax: (202)832-5195

ogc@maryknoll.org www.maryknollogc.org

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**

Susan Gunn, interim director..... sgunn@maryknoll.org
 Fr. Francis J. Breen, MM..... fjbreen@maryknoll.org
 Anna Engelmann..... aengelmann@maryknoll.org
 Dave Kane..... dglobalcitizenkane@gmail.com
 Sr. Marvie Misolas, MM..... mmisolas@mksisters.org
 Chloe Schwabe..... cschwabe@maryknoll.org
 Sr. Veronica Schweyen, MM..... vschweyen@maryknoll.org

MOGC Washington
 200 New York Ave., N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20001
 (202)832-1780
 ogc@maryknoll.org

MOGC Maryknoll NY
 P.O. Box 311
 Maryknoll, NY 10545-0311
 (914)941-7575
 ogc@maryknoll.org

MOGC UN Office
 777 First Ave., 10th Fl.
 New York, NY 10115
 (212)973-9551

To contribute to *NewsNotes*, please contact Susan Gunn at sgunn@maryknoll.org.

Take action - Email, call, fax or write U.S. decision makers

President Donald Trump
 The White House
 Washington, D.C. 20500
 www.whitehouse.gov

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

Jim Yong Kim
 President
 World Bank Group
 1818 H Street, N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20433
 www.worldbank.org

Vice President Mike Pence
 The White House
 Washington, D.C. 20500
 vice_president@whitehouse.gov

Attorney General
 U.S. Department of Justice
 Washington, D.C. 20530
 (202)353-1555 phone
 AskDOJ@usdoj.gov
 www.justice.gov

Christine Lagarde
 Managing Director
 International Monetary Fund
 700 19th Street, N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20431
 www.imf.org

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

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

U.S. Representative to UN
 799 United Nations Plaza
 New York, NY 10017
 (212) 415-4000 phone
 www.usunnewyork.usmission.gov

Current status of bills:
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 (202) 224-3121
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World AIDS Day: Challenges to 'Know Your Status'

Maryknoll Lay Missioner Susan Nagele, a family physician who returned to the United States in July from East Africa after 33 years of service, writes about the work of Maryknoll missionaries in Kenya and Tanzania.

Mary was as skinny as a rail. Now twenty, she was orphaned many years ago when her parents died of HIV/AIDS. We had been trying for years to get her tested to know if she, too, was infected. She was a bright girl who scored well and went to a prestigious high school on scholarship but she couldn't find a job (Unemployment among young people in Kenya is about 50 percent). She had been volunteering at St. Patrick Dispensary in the informal settlement called Bangladesh in Mombasa, Kenya, where she was given a little money for transport and lunch.

One day, Mary came to work very sick. She was so poor she couldn't afford to miss working for a little food. I again asked her why she was so afraid to be tested. She said that if she was positive she would feel terrible. It would mean that she was infected by her mother and everyone would know. I talked about bad luck, a loving God who doesn't judge, and the real problem, which is **people who judge**. She shouldn't let them make her feel bad. I told her that if she was positive we have medicines to make her stronger and healthier. In my desperation I told her I am sick too and have to take medicine four times a day. I thank God that there is medicine to help me. All of the sudden she said OK. I went quiet. She told me that she wanted a certain person to test her and she didn't want anyone else to know the result. The test came out negative. Mary was skinny because she was poor and didn't have enough food.

The UN target is to diagnose 90 percent of people infected with HIV by 2020. Currently, only 70 percent of infected people know their status. Stigma and fear are major reasons why people like Mary refuse testing.

Mary's poverty confirms the experience of Joanne Miya, a Maryknoll Lay Missioner in Tanzania. She works at Uzima Centre in the city of Mwanza which provides education and counseling for HIV/AIDS. The majority of problems they encounter are due to **poverty**, not HIV infection. On any given day, the Centre struggles to find a boy with HIV a bicycle so he can go to go to school; to help a mother find her HIV+ daughter who is working as a prostitute; to assist an HIV+ grandmother who has no income and is raising her grandchild.

If people had adequate income they would have better food, homes, and schooling. HIV is the straw that breaks their backs, already bent by the multiple burdens of poverty.

The theme for World AIDS Day on December 1, 2018 is '**KNOW YOUR STATUS**'

In Kenya, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has adopted the WHO guidelines for self-testing and kits are available in pharmacies for \$2-\$15 – expensive! Initial fears that people would react negatively and commit suicide have been unfounded. Thousands of people have used the kits successfully. The MoH plans to make them free in government facilities. Fr. Rick Bauer is a Maryknoll priest who works with the Eastern Deanery AIDS Relief Program in Nairobi, Kenya. He is working with the WHO and donors to make the kits available free of charge in faith-based organizations, too. The key to HIV self-testing is to link people with positive reactive home tests to clinics that can perform confirmation tests and follow up with care, treatment and support. Many of the implementing partners have limited resources to go into the communities. The Eastern Deanery AIDS Relief Program has over 1,200 community health workers who know their communities and can provide this needed link.

The city of Nairobi will mark Universal Children's Day on November 20 with the theme **Ending AIDS and TB in Children and Adolescents**. After a procession and an interfaith prayer service, faith leaders will lead by example with voluntary testing. There will be voluntary counseling and testing for youth and a workshop on HIV self-testing for faith communities. Children and youth will be encouraged to write letters to the government, the First Lady and pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies requesting improved access to HIV and TB information, testing, and treatment. Fr. Bauer is a main coordinator of this initiative among faith-based organizations.

In Tanzania, the government occasionally gives HIV education on the radio and the local government "AIDS Committee" shows little interest, initiative, or awareness when they visit the Uzima Centre. There has been no promotion of HIV self-testing and little preparation for World AIDS Day. Few are aware of Universal Children's Day.

There is great disparity between the programs of these two countries. Fear, stigma and poverty are the scourges that prevent people from **knowing their status**. Maryknoll and other faith communities are leading the way to combat that. §

UN General Assembly: Shared responsibilities

Maryknoll Sister Marvie L. Misolas reports on the critical issues discussed by world leaders during the annual general debate of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September.

The 73rd session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 73) opened on September 18. Ecuadorian diplomat Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, the first woman president of the UNGA from Latin America, announced in July that the theme of the general debate will be, ‘Making the United Nations Relevant to All People: Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Peaceful, Equitable and Sustainable Societies.’

The first day of the high-level general debate was September 25. Over the course of seven days, world leaders engaged in discussions that included the following critical global topics.

Peace and Security

Iraq’s foreign minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, highlighted the war-torn country’s plan for national economic, social, and cultural progress with a focus on young people and women, as well as its efforts to aid returning refugees. He also called on nations to meet their financial commitments to strengthen Iraqi state institutions.

Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem of Syria denounced the U.S. for “supporting terrorism and war crimes” and demanded “occupation” forces from the U.S., France, and Turkey leave the country immediately. He characterized the seven-year war as almost over and said Syria is inviting back millions of refugees who fled their homeland due to terrorism and economic stress.

Ministers from African countries in the Lake Chad Basin region, including Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, committed to working collectively to stop the spread of the extremist group Boko Haram and illicit trafficking of all sorts, including human trafficking. The region contains numerous hotspots of conflict and crisis, including illegal immigration, organized crime, drought, and desertification, which make it home to one of the most severe humanitarian emergencies in the world. To address these concerns, Chad pressed for a permanent seat on the Security Council to represent Africa.

North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho reiterated his country’s commitment to denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, while calling into question the United States’ commitment due to continuing sanctions. Ri said North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un’s resolve is to turn the Korean peninsula into a land free of both nuclear weapons and threat. The two Koreas will become the “cradle of peace and prosperity that contributes to security in Asia and the rest of the world,” Ri said.

Migrants and Refugees

Sudanese Foreign Minister Dardari Mohamed Ahmed said Sudan currently hosts three million refugees and shoulders two-thirds of the costs. He praised the Karthoum Process, a platform for political cooperation among the countries along the migration route between the Horn of Africa and Europe, for slowing down the flow of migrants from Africa to Europe, which has aided efforts to combat human trafficking in the region.

The Holy See, represented by Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, noted the importance of the Global Compact on Migration, to be adopted in December in Morocco, and said that together with the Global Compact on Refugees, they will be “useful tools for good migration management at every level and a common resource for achieving our shared responsibility in front of the plight of refugees.”

Nuclear Disarmament

On September 26, the UN commemorated the Day for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons with strong warnings by some member states of a renewed nuclear arms race coupled with modernization. All member states agree that nuclear weapons are the greatest existential threat to the world and the vast majority agree that the principle of deterrence is incompatible with the UN’s principle of peace and security. The Holy See expressed the importance of the deep bond between the promotion of a culture of peace and disarmament efforts and said that maintaining nuclear weapons costs billions in funds that could be invested in sustainable development. Groups of countries are reportedly working to establish ‘nuclear free zones’ in Asia, Latin America, Middle East, Africa and the South Pacific. At the same time, the call from civil society for a full and irreversible nuclear disarmament and total non-proliferation is loud and clear. It includes support for the ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Climate Change

In his opening address, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned heads of states about the speed of climate change impacting both nations and individual lives across the globe. Members of the group Small Island Developing States decried their vulnerability to rising sea levels, typhoons, drought, and encroaching salty waters. These countries are calling for urgent implementation of the Paris climate agreement. §

Strategic dismantling of U.S. refugee program

National refugee resettlement agencies are closing offices and laying off staff in response to the steep decline in arrivals under the Trump administration, leaving the future of the program uncertain.

The Trump administration lowered the annual cap on the number of refugees it will admit and resettle in 2019 to 30,000, after failing to meet even half of this year's historically low goal of 45,000. By setting the lowest bar since the resettlement program began in 1980, many fear the United States will abandon the most desperate people during the worst global refugee crisis since the Second World War; forfeit a powerful diplomatic tool and step away from our traditional commitment to human rights; and lose out on the contributions that refugees make to our communities and economy.

Another hidden cost of the Trump administration's radical turn is the profound structural damage it's already doing to the refugee resettlement system itself, which could severely limit the nation's capacity in ways that would take years for subsequent administrations to reverse and rebuild.

"There has been, over the last two years, a systematic dismantling of the refugee-resettlement infrastructure by the administration, either directly or indirectly," said Emily Gray, a senior official at World Relief, one of the nine nongovernmental agencies that the U.S. government contracts to assist and resettle refugees. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is the largest of the nine, which are all struggling to sustain operations as the numbers of refugees plummet. The State Department is expected to cut one or more of the agencies next year. "We see an administration that's running a program that it's intent on destroying," said Mark Hetfield, president of the Jewish refugee organization HIAS, also one of the nine.

The system started to tank with Trump's two bans on Muslims and other refugees in 2017. With "extreme vetting" by an array of agencies, new layers of red tape and a gauntlet of other obstacles were added to an already onerous system, leaving many refugees to languish in line while they missed deadlines, or medical or security clearances expired, jamming a complex inter-agency process that already took an average of two years to complete. Compounding the slowdown, resources and personnel have been diverted to other programs, such as the screeners sent to fast-track the denial and deportation of asylum seekers from Central America. Taken together with shrinking admissions, critics say these roadblocks are wrecking the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) while they decimate the nonprofit and com-

munity partners that help integrate refugees into society. The program is being "managed to fail," said Bob Carey, former director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement under Obama.

While they tangled the system, President Trump and other White House staff have vilified refugees by exaggerating their threat to national security (No refugee resettled in the U.S. has ever committed a lethal act of terrorism since the program began in 1980) and dismissing their value to the country and economy. Last year, for example, the White House suppressed a government report showing that refugees posed almost no threat to national security and quashed another report that found that refugees' economic benefit exceeded their cost by \$63 billion over the last decade. Two senior staff who questioned the administration's policies were removed from their positions.

Without sufficient flow to sustain operations, the nine refugee agencies are having to cut staff and shutter offices, causing a brain drain and drying up relationships with smaller organizations and volunteers who help newcomers find jobs, use public transportation, find housing and register for school. Employers who used to recruit from the agencies are looking elsewhere. The bottleneck is felt in many communities. For example, this year the numbers of new arrivals has declined 70 percent in both greater New York and Washington, D.C.-Baltimore regions alone. Catholic Charities has already closed eight offices and plans to close another 14 this year. World Relief has closed seven. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services affiliates have laid off more than 100 of its staff. The agencies and their partners are struggling to survive. "Our fears are in a short period of time you can destroy something that's worked very well," said Paedia Mixon, CEO of New American Pathways, an Atlanta-based resettlement agency.

With bipartisan support, the USRAP has resettled more than 3 million refugees since 1980. The average annual cap exceeds 95,000 – with low points after 9/11 and two peaks of 200,000 under President Ronald Reagan. Cutting capacity limits the ability to quickly mobilize in a crisis, like past administrations responded to refugees fleeing Vietnam, Cuba, the former Soviet Union, Kosovo, Myanmar and Iran. "It's a new low in our country," said Carey, the former Obama official. "I think it will ultimately make the world less secure."§

Trade: Will the 'new NAFTA' promote justice?

Congress is expected to vote on the renegotiated trade agreement between the U.S., Mexico and Canada in early 2019.

From Cambodia to El Salvador, Bangladesh to Tanzania, Maryknoll missionaries accompany people and communities affected by poverty. Based on our belief in the value of each human person and their right to a life of dignity, we work to eliminate the root causes of poverty found in unjust economic structures.

Maryknoll Sister Marvelous Misolas was at the United Nations to commemorate the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty in October when Secretary-General António Guterres said, "Poverty is not inevitable. It is not a natural state of being or occurrence. It is most often the outcome of choices that societies have made. Today we must build a fair globalization that creates opportunities for all. Inclusive growth supported by economic and social policies that empower people and provide equal opportunities make the difference."

"I agree with Secretary-General Guterres," said Sister Misolas, a native of the Philippines who served in Taiwan and is now the nongovernmental representative of the Maryknoll Sisters at the U.N. "Ending poverty is not a matter of charity; it is a question of justice."

After more than two decades, NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, Canada and the United States, has failed to eliminate the root causes of poverty and create opportunities for all. It has at times undermined worker rights and fueled nationalism. Renegotiated and renamed the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), the new deal needs

to be approved by the U.S. Congress and ratified by all three countries before going into effect. A draft of the USMCA is available on the website of the Office of the United States Trade Representative (ustr.gov).

These are questions people of faith and conscience can ask their members of Congress as they study and vote on the deal in 2019:

Does the "new NAFTA" work for economic justice with an emphasis on the elimination of poverty and the empowerment of impoverished people? What will its impact be on labor standards and protections for workers; on the access to agricultural resources such as seeds, and affordable medicines; on food safety and health care concerns; and on corporate accountability and ecological sustainability?

Faith in action:

Read and share fact sheets by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy on what the "new NAFTA" means for farming and food. <http://bit.ly/NewNAFTAanalysis>

Find resources on trade and Catholic social teaching produced by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, including a two-page background on trade, on the USCCB website <http://bit.ly/USCCBTrade>

Share with your members of Congress the Interfaith Call for Access for Medicines to ask our political leaders to uphold access to medicines in the new trade deal <http://bit.ly/InterfaithLetterMedicines>

Urgent call for climate action and post-growth economy

The following is an excerpt from a joint statement by 18 Catholic development agencies, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, in response to a special report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which concludes that the world has 12 years to limit climate change catastrophe.

... "Limiting global warming to 1.5°C is a matter of survival for all and it is feasible through bold political actions: the barriers to fighting climate change are political! Now more than ever we need leaders to acknowledge and take actions to curb our current emissions trajectory. It is a moral imperative reminding us firstly of the dramatic risks for people and the planet, which are already experienced by the most vulnerable. Our current emissions have impacts such as the loss of biodiversity, the forced displacement of millions of people, the loss of yields threatening to food safety, rising sea levels, and ocean warming that threatens marine life with direct

consequences of fisheries.

"We are calling for a complete paradigm shift: climate change cannot be tackled in isolation."

"...a deep and rapid shift in our food and energy systems, supported by structural lifestyle and societal changes, could greatly contribute to limiting the rise in average global temperatures to 1.5°C." ... "According to the IPCC report only a small number of pathways to 1.5°C that don't involve carbon removal exists."...

"We must phase out fossil fuels and switch towards renewable energy systems."... §

Read more at <http://bit.ly/12YearsToAct>

Fossil fuel divestment: Addressing critiques

In this final article in our four-part series, we explore some of the common critiques of the fossil fuel divestment campaign.

As the fossil fuel divestment-investment campaign has grown over the past eight years, fossil fuel companies have responded by creating a website and fake grassroots campaigns to disparage the idea. Most commenters ignore the main reasons for the campaign that we detailed in our first article in this series: moral and financial concerns around fossil fuel investments.

One of the most repeated criticisms is that divestment doesn't affect the stock prices of fossil fuel companies, that it is a "fool's errand." But for many supporters of the campaign, divesting is done not so much to affect the companies but rather to align their investments with their moral beliefs. For example, they do not want to experience mixed emotions when the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve is opened to oil exploration, knowing that they will have larger returns. They want their financial wellbeing to coincide with the wellbeing of the planet and society. In the same way that socially-responsible investors avoid companies that manufacture weapons, addictive substances, and pornography, today's investors want to avoid profiting from Earth's destruction.

Also, while the campaign may not directly affect stock prices, fossil fuel companies are affected in other ways. A University of Oxford study showed that "the divestment campaign could pose considerable reputational risk to fossil fuel companies even if its immediate direct effects are likely to be limited." Other divestment campaigns have succeeded in creating a stigma around targeted firms that have far-reaching effects, from diminishing debt financing opportunities to "scar[ing] away suppliers, subcontractors, potential employees and customers" to inspiring new legislation. The Oxford study characterized this last point – new legislation – as one of the most important ways in which stigmatization could impact fossil fuel companies.

"In almost every divestment campaign we reviewed, from adult services to Darfur, from tobacco to South Africa, divestment campaigns were successful in lobbying for restrictive legislation affecting stigmatized firms," the Oxford study concluded. Other studies confirm these effects.

Another common critique of the divestment campaign is that removing fossil fuel investments will diminish a portfolio's return. This is an area where managers will have to do their own due diligence as there are a number of studies with conflicting findings.

Studies by MSCI ESG Research, Aperio Group, Northstar Asset Management, Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis and others have shown minimal to negative costs associated with divesting from fossil fuels. Studies from Compass Lexecon, the California Institute of Technology, and others, however, indicate high costs for divesting from fossil fuels. It is important to note that these studies have been commissioned and financed by the Independent Petroleum Association of America.

Each organization needs to estimate its own potential costs and reflect on what, if any, losses it is willing to accept in order to align its investment with its values.

Some refer to the fiduciary responsibility of fund managers to maximize returns as a reason not to divest, yet as former SEC Commissioner Bevis Longstreth points out in a speech to investors, "Based on an informed view of all climate change factors... it is easy to conclude on the basis of financial considerations alone that divestment of fossil fuel company holdings is a permissible option. And the moral dimension makes this conclusion even more powerful."

The Bank of England's Prudential Regulation Authority spelled out the various threats to fossil fuel companies from climate change:

Physical risks: destruction of properties, disruptions of global supply chains or resource scarcity due to increasingly powerful storms and floods;

Transition risks: increasing competition as the transition to a lower-carbon economy takes place and alternative fuels and battery technologies improve;

Liability risks: parties which have suffered loss due to climate change may seek to recover losses from those they believe to be responsible.

Finally, what the detractors from the fossil fuel divestment-investment campaign often fail to recognize in their critiques is the investment side of the campaign. As the International Panel on Climate Change's recently released climate study showed, the transition away from a fossil fuel-dependent economy needs to happen at a faster pace than originally thought. At a time like this, the least we can do is move our investments from fossil fuel companies to businesses birthing a more sustainable economy, though clearly much more than this will be required of us. §

Palm oil: Addressing negative impacts

The third and final article in a series examining problems with palm oil production.

Stakeholders have created a number of certification schemes to address social and ecological problems caused by the production of palm oil. Unfortunately, these programs are voluntary and have had little to no effect on slowing deforestation and loss of biodiversity or improving working conditions on plantations. In this final part of the series, we look at these programs and propose ways to improve their effectiveness.

The largest and one of the more effective palm oil certification programs is the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), founded in 2004 by stakeholders ranging from oil palm producers and processors to banks, investors and environmental and developmental NGOs. Though the RSPO certifies more than 2.5 million hectares, this only represents 19 percent of global palm oil production and even that plan is fatally flawed.

Some of the failings of the RSPO described by the Changing Markets Foundation include allowing the conversion of secondary forests (areas of regrowth after initial deforestation) and the draining of peatlands (wetlands important for safe drinking water that minimize flood risks and sequester large amounts of carbon dioxide).

A 2015 study of the RSPO by the Environmental Investigation Agency found certified operators committing serious breaches of RSPO principles, auditors producing fraudulent reports and failing to identify indigenous land rights claims as well as conflicts of interest between palm oil producers and the auditors.

The following year, Amnesty International investigated Wilmar, the world's largest processor and merchandiser of palm oil, controlling 43 percent of global production. It found serious human rights violations including "forced labor, child labor, gender discrimination and dangerous working conditions that put the health of workers at risk" on Wilmar plantations as well as its suppliers. Worse, Amnesty reports that "the abuses identified were not isolated incidents but due to systemic business practices by Wilmar's subsidiaries and suppliers," of which all but one are members of the RSPO.

A final problem with the RSPO is its inability to trace specific batches of sustainable-certified palm oil across the supply chain in most of its schemes. It created two certificate trading programs, GreenPalm and Palm-Trace, that allow "manufacturers and retailers that produce palm oil products [to] bid for and buy certificates to offset their use of non-certified palm oil." Yet the Chain Reaction Foundation describes these programs as "a stark expression of the potential 'greenwashing' ef-

fect of palm oil certification schemes [because] the core principle of these platforms is separating the sustainability claim of a producer or retailer from the actual physical content of the product produced or sold."

There are other certification schemes such as the Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard, International Sustainability and Carbon Certification, and the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (RSB) but they cover minuscule amounts of global palm oil and have many of the same failings of the RSPO. Indonesia and Malaysia have created their own certification schemes (Indonesia Sustainable Palm Oil and Malaysia Sustainable Palm Oil), yet they are the weakest of all and represent a "race to the bottom" with minimal requirements and questionable verification measures.

Two options that are stronger than the RSPO are the Palm Oil Innovation Group (POIG) and the European Union's Ecolabel. The POIG was founded in 2013 by progressive palm oil producers and NGOs to build upon RSPO standards and promote new ways to address sustainability. One innovation from POIG is the High Carbon Stock Approach, considered by many to be the best methodology for implementing zero deforestation policies. It focuses on protecting areas with the most carbon and biodiversity density and using procedures stronger than Free, Prior and Informed Consent to guarantee the protection and participation of indigenous communities.

The EU's Ecolabel covers the full life cycle of palm oil (and a host of other products) from extraction of the raw materials to production and transport until its use and disposal or recycling. This is essential to guarantee that end products do not contain unsustainable inputs.

In order to guarantee sustainable palm oil production, the Chain Reaction Foundation report concludes that "the most unambitious schemes – especially those set up by the Malaysian and Indonesian governments – should be abandoned." Also, governments should stop encouraging the use of biofuels as this increases the demand for palm oil. Certification schemes also need to incorporate indirect land use changes that account for how palm oil competes for land against food production resulting in higher food prices.

Regardless of improvements to voluntary certification schemes, governments need to create policies that include demand-side sustainability criteria for market access to importing countries, or even effective quantity restrictions in order to prevent the expansion of unsustainable palm oil production. §

DHUMA receives Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award

A human rights organization co-founded by Maryknoll Sister Patricia Ryan has won the Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award for 2018 for its work with indigenous communities in Peru. The following speech was delivered by Sister Ryan and her colleagues Cristobal Yugra and Yolanda Flores at the award ceremony sponsored by the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. on October 4, 2018.

CRISTOBAL YUGRA: My name is Cristobal and I am here tonight with Yolanda and with Sister Patricia. We very happy to be with you here tonight. We are representing DHUMA [Derechos Humanos y Medioambiente, which translates “Human Rights and the Environment”] and we want to tell you a little bit about DHUMA and our work.

DHUMA is an human rights and environmental organization from southern Peru. We are a team of men and women, attorneys, social communicators, and community activists based in the city of Puno on the banks of beautiful Lake Titicaca.

If we had to summarize our work in a few words we'd say that it involves making visible what has been invisible and silenced for centuries. More than anything else, DHUMA is a community of people committed to change and social justice. We are always looking for ways to put our institutional capacity at the service of the Aymara and Quechua communities, whom we have worked with for many years, who are crying out for justice.

To put our work into context, we should say a little about where we have come from. In 1998, with the blessing of the Bishop of Juli, a Maryknoll priest, our offices were opened in Puno under the name of the Vicariate of Solidarity with the Prelature of Juli.

In those years of armed conflict in Peru, the indigenous Aymara and Quechua people – who had been victims of discrimination and exclusion for centuries – were in the crossfire. The civil war lasted 20 years and took the lives of more than 70,000 people, 3/4 of whom were indigenous people

At that time, our mission was to protect life and human rights in a time of internal conflict. Our position was always to reject violence “no matter where it came from” and to always try to create pathways towards true peace.

In 2007, there was a drastic change in the church's position with the arrival of an Opus Dei bishop who wanted to put an end to our work. In the end, we all decided to resign, and we left behind all of our infrastructure, our labor rights and benefits, etc. and created “Human Rights and the Environment” (DHUMA). We are proud to say that we have never stopped working

– even for one day – on behalf of the Quechua and Aymara communities of the Puno highlands of Peru.

SISTER PATRICIA RYAN: Indigenous communities today are facing a different type of violence so we have had to adapt our work. Today, it's not armed groups that we have to stand up to, but rather extractive industries and multi-national companies.

In the last few years, we have been dedicated to teaching, defending, and making it possible to enforce the rights of indigenous peoples and the rights of Mother Earth, especially in the area of water. Our entire water supply is endangered today due to the impacts of climate change and severe contamination caused by mining.

The government is giving out mining concessions in areas that coincide with indigenous territories without any respect for the right to free, prior, and informed consent. This situation has led to endless social and environmental conflicts. Puno has the second highest number of these conflicts in the country, conflicts that are the cause of constant tension, death, injuries, arrests, suits, and prison sentences imposed on indigenous people.

One of the most important tools that we use in our work is strategic litigation. When we take a case to court, it is not only to defend the rights of indigenous peoples in specific cases, but also to establish precedents and jurisprudence that will strengthen the legal framework for preventing and resolving conflicts in the future.

There's a particular case that we are working on now that is extremely important for the rights of the Aymara people of Puno and here is where we'd like to ask for your solidarity.

It involves a case known as the “Aymarazo” where more than 20,000 peasant farmers from the Aymara communities mobilized in 2011 to defend their territory and their right to water, and they gave a firm “No” to the presence of the Santa Ana mining project owned by Bear Creek Mining of Canada. The government has been forced to stop operations at Santa Ana, but at the same time, the Peruvian Justice Department filed charges against community representatives and spokespeople, and Aymara spokesperson Walter Aduviri was sentenced to 7 years in jail and given a fine of 2 million soles. (\$600,000 USD)

The Aymarazo case is emblematic of the criminal-

ization of social protest, and if this decision is ratified by the Supreme Court tomorrow – October 5 – it will set dangerous precedents for future indigenous defenders all over Peru.

YOLANDA FLORES: After the Aymarazo mobilizations, Bear Creek Mining successfully sued the country of Peru through the ICSID (International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes), the investment arbitration arm of the World Bank here in Washington, D.C. Now the Peruvian people have to compensate this company by paying them more than 30 million dollars. This money that could have gone to pay for basic services that Peruvian people need, is now going to a Canadian multinational. ICSID only considers the rights of foreign investors and does not even look at the abuses and violations committed against the indigenous peoples. And indigenous peoples don't have a way to appeal to these international organizations when multinational companies violate their rights. The most serious thing is that the Santa Ana mining project concessions continue to be in the hands of the Canadian company, a very clear indication that economic interests are prevailing over human rights.

These are our battles, dear friends. DHUMA is a small organization and our contributions are humble. But as we join forces with national and international allies we can make a greater impact on behalf of the indigenous communities we serve, who will always be the primary protagonists.

We are very grateful for the great honor you bestow upon us tonight. Thank you for believing in us and for joining in solidarity with the Aymara and Quechua communities of Puno and with all of the native peoples of Peru. We accept this prestigious recognition, the Letelier-Moffit International Human Rights award, in honor of these communities, who are courageous defenders of Mother Earth.

Many thanks to the groups that have accompanied us: the Institute for Policy Studies, the whole Maryknoll family, the Democracy Center of Bolivia, Mining Watch Canada, and to all those who make our work possible, and we thank you for your presence here tonight. We promise to continue to be faithful to the memory of Orlando Letelier, to the promotion and defense of our Aymara and Quechua people, and to the defense of Pachamama. §

Israel/Palestine: Protecting Palestinian village

Israeli authorities postponed the demolition of the Bedouin village Khan-al-Ahmar as Palestinians struck along the West Bank.

The Palestinian village of Khan al-Ahmar in the West Bank of the Occupied Territories has been under threat of demolition by the Israeli government for nearly ten years, ever since the European Union, Belgium, Italy and Italian NGO Terra di Vento built a school out of tires and mud in the village which now serves 150 children from the surrounding area. The school, along with the residential and other structures in the village, were in fact built without obtaining building permits from Israel – however, building permits for Palestinians in “Area C” are seldom, if ever, approved. This is a common tactic used by Israel to justify restricting development in Palestinian villages and demolishing Palestinian homes.

Khan al-Ahmar is a village of around 180 people in the unfortunate position of being geographically located in an area where Israel intends to expand its illegal settlements from Jerusalem eastward until they reach the Jordanian border and the Dead Sea, severing the West Bank into two separate territories and effectively precluding the possibility of East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

In 2017 Israel announced that the villagers must relocate to a site next to a garbage dump to make way for demolition of Khan al-Ahmar, prompting nonviolent demonstrations and a petition on behalf of the villagers to Israel's Supreme Court to stay the demolition order. In September, the Supreme Court determined that it would not interfere and allowed the eviction to continue.

In response, the international community, including government bodies, UN representatives, the International Criminal Court and religious groups put pressure on the Israeli government to take heed of international law which forbids forced relocation of residents in occupied territories – pressure which seems to have been effective, though perhaps only temporarily. On October 21, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced a temporary halt on evacuation and demolition of Khan al-Ahmar to allow more time for an agreement to be reached with villagers about the relocation site.

See pictures of nonviolent witness by international supporters with Khan al-Ahmar villagers on October 1st <http://bit.ly/KhanalAhmar> §

El Salvador: Celebration of St. Óscar Romero

Maryknoll Lay Missioner Peg Vámosy writes about celebrating the canonization of Archbishop Romero with her parish in Monte San Juan, El Salvador on the Maryknoll Lay Missioners website. Reprinted with permission.

The canonization of Óscar Arnulfo Romero, the martyred archbishop of San Salvador was a true fiesta. While the actual canonization took place in Rome on Sunday, October 14, the celebration of the new saint in his home country was typically loud and colorful.

In the capital of San Salvador, several venues hosted activities with wide participation by the faithful. I live and work as a Maryknoll Lay Missioner in the rural parish of Monte San Juan, about an hour outside of San Salvador. Rather than go to the big events in the city, I chose to celebrate with the people in our parish, who have become like family to me in the six years that I have lived here now.

Like the San Salvador celebration and those in many parishes around the country, we had a march or procession on Saturday evening, which was followed by a Mass and an all-night vigil. For those who could stay awake, the vigil culminated in watching the papal Mass live from Rome, at 2 a.m. our time.

Rather than walking the city streets, our march went from the village at one end of the parish the mile or so to the main church in the center of the town. While the vigil in the city included professional musicians and well-choreographed cultural events, ours was home-grown and heart-felt and featured local youths, some “performing” in public for the first time.

We had four choirs from different villages who enlivened the march. Another led the music at Mass and yet another kept people awake during the night – all with songs about Romero and other music that got people on their feet, clapping and interacting with each other.

Despite some technical problems, we were able to watch a couple of videos about Romero as well as the televised Mass from Rome on a sheet strung up in the church and projected from a laptop computer.

The young people also made a very moving if not flawless presentation of some of the many other martyrs of El Salvador. Those honored include the four U.S. churchwomen (two Maryknoll Sisters, an Ursuline Sister and Jean Donovan, who trained with the Maryknoll Lay Missioners) killed here in 1980, and two catechists from our own parish of Monte San Juan.

One youth group painted a new (the third) Romero mural on the side of the church, this one depicting the new saint among the Salvadoran people and with his friend, also martyred Jesuit Father Rutilio Grande. Our pastor, Father Mauricio Saravia, blessed a new bust of

Romero at the entrance of the church.

We ran out of time for some of the planned activities, but everyone who came from all 12 villages of the parish got to enjoy tamales and coffee, which all the communities provided.

During the Mass, when Pope Francis named Romero among the new saints, we stood and applauded and, of course, people shot off lots of fireworks and rang the church bells!

A few months ago, after the date for the canonization had been announced, we were discussing how we would refer to the new saint—‘St. Óscar,’ ‘St. Romero,’ etc. A priest from a nearby parish, Father Luís Coto said, “He’ll always be ‘Monseñor’ to us,” indicating the respect and love the people have for him. As we were walking in the evening procession, I heard a child behind me read the message on one of the posters: “The voice of the voiceless.” Her father then explained to her, “In those days you couldn’t say anything against the government or speak up about the bad things happening. But Monseñor wasn’t afraid to denounce the evils and that’s why they killed him.”

During our celebration I asked Gerardo, now in his 80s, what Archbishop Romero meant to him; he said: the truth and the light. “There were two sides during that time, and you couldn’t believe either of them, but Monseñor Romero spoke the truth. He was the voice and the light to follow.”

While there are countless Romero followers especially among the poor, one of the great challenges today is convincing a still significant part of the Salvadoran population, including many within the church, of the truth about him. Assassinated while celebrating Mass by forces of the powerful ruling elite backed by the military of the 1970s and ’80s, Romero was appropriated by the left and his history was manipulated by both sides of the armed conflict that continued for the next 12 years.

Since his beatification in 2015, there has been a more concerted effort to spread the truth about his fidelity to the church, his compassionate and outspoken support for his people, particularly the poor, the vulnerable and the voiceless, his pleas for dialogue instead of violence, and his clamor for justice without siding with any political forces. Hopefully his recognition as El Salvador’s first saint will bring about a greater understanding of his life and virtues, and serve as an example of faithfulness for more of us to follow. §

Uganda: Rising calls for political change

Waves of protests against the autocratic rule of Yoweri Museveni, 74 years old and president of Uganda for close to 33 years, raise questions over how long he will remain in power.

Opposition to Museveni's rule has been brought to a head by the brutal and inept manner by which he reacted to musician-turned-politician Robert Kyagulanyi, popularly known as Bobi Wine, and for Museveni's murderous treatment of other opposition politicians. When the bill to raise presidential age limits was brought to a vote last year, soldiers entered the parliamentary chambers, followed by the Presidential Guard, which hauled off a number of MPs to vans where they were beaten. Bobi Wine and his 'People Power' movement were slowly gaining followers until August 13, when Museveni ordered his forces to "discipline" Wine after a political rally in Arua. The Independent candidate for a parliamentary seat backed by Wine won the election.

After the rally, soldiers of the Special Forces Command (SFC) led by Museveni's son went into the hotel where Wine and other politicians were staying and savagely beat them, killing at least six people, including Wine's driver. The soldiers' barbarity and numerous unfounded claims made by Museveni – for instance, that they found guns in the hotel – grabbed international attention and ignited national furor, forcing the release of Wine and one other MP, Francis Butebe Zaake, who went to India for two months' medical treatment. Protests broke out throughout the country while Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) party remained silent.

Wine's injuries were so serious that he sought treatment in the United States, where he took the opportunity to speak with government officials and the media. Several days before his return to Kampala on September 20, Wine said, "The struggle we are facing is not limited to Uganda alone, but it's a struggle against oppression across Africa and indeed across the world. We call upon Africans, especially young Africans, to know that there will never be another time for them to assert their rights other than now."

Wine, who is 36 years old and was elected MP for his home area of Kamwokya, a poor section of Kampala, in November 2017, is representative of Uganda's young

generation which is tired of Museveni's long, autocratic, and corrupt rule. Uganda is the world's second youngest country, with three-quarters of the population under age 30. Just prior to Wine's return to Uganda, Museveni gave a long, rambling talk praising the strength of the economy under his rule and castigated the youth for not finding jobs.

Uganda experienced healthy GDP growth in the first decade of this century, averaging around seven percent per year, but this has declined in recent years. Approximately 70 percent of the population earns less than \$2.50 a day, a figure that has not changed in the last 40 years. This is compounded by insufficient investment in

education in a country with one of the highest rates of fertility in the world, suggesting Uganda may not benefit from a possible 'demographic dividend.'

After Museveni won the presidential election in February 2016, the Washington Post editorialized: "As aging autocrats such as Mr. Museveni use U.S.-bankrolled security forces to crack down on opposition candidates, journalists and peaceful protests, lavish security assistance from the United States may be helping to enable an environment of increasing repression in Uganda, and sending the message to other African nations that trampling on rights is permissible so long as the country remains a U.S. counterterrorism

ally." Uganda has provided troops to fight Al Shabaab in Somalia, rewarded by over \$800 million in aid from the U.S. every year. However, Museveni's mis-steps have strained his close relations with western governments.

Bobi Wine scheduled a concert at Namboole National Stadium in Kampala, first in October and then in November, to launch a new song, but the stadium's managers were forced to reject his request. The next presidential election will be in 2021. Wine has stated he does not intend to run for president nor form a new party, instead focusing on political change such as a political system that represents people, especially the young and the poor. §



Bobi Wine (l.) and Léonce Byimana (r.), executive director of Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition International (TASSC) in Washington, D.C., September 13, 2018.

Resources

- 1) **World AIDS Day Prayer Vigil:** Join us online on **December 1** to pray for those living with HIV and AIDS and for those whose lives were cut short due to HIV or AIDS. Add your name and the time when you wish to pray on December 1 to the list at <http://bit.ly/AIDSDayprayervigil>
- 2) **Continental Catholic bishops' statement on climate change:** Catholic bishops from five continents issued an urgent appeal to world leaders calling on them to work together to achieve the goals of the Paris climate agreement at COP 24. <http://bit.ly/2RtVb0V>
- 3) **Faith letter on environmental safeguards:** A total of 132 faith-based organizations signed onto a letter to the leaders of the U.S. EPA and Department of Interior representing 33 states and a diversity of faith traditions. <https://bit.ly/2PXZaCC>
- 4) **IPCC Special Report on Climate Change** is available at <http://ipcc.ch/report/sr15/>. This includes the Summary for Policymakers and chapters of the full report.
- 5) **USCCB/MRS and LIRS report:** *Serving Separated and Reunited Families: Lessons Learned and the Way Forward to Promote Family Unity*, which documents the work of USCCB and Catholic and LIRS and Lutheran partners in assisting the separated families that were reunited and released in July 2018. The report provides unique data regarding the separated and reunited families, as well as recommendations to the Administration and Congress. <http://bit.ly/2DeGr2Y>
- 5) **Central America Monitor database:** New database by the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) tracks U.S. assistance to the region by country, year, program to help address the root causes of migration. <http://bit.ly/WOLAMonitor>
- 6) **"Imprisoning a Generation":** a 50-minute documentary film which follows the stories of four young Palestinians who have been detained and imprisoned under the Israeli military system. Their perspectives, along with the voices of their families, combine to form a lens into the entangled structures of oppression that expand well beyond the prison walls. A trailer of the film can be found at: www.anemoia.net This film is available for organizations and congregations to screen for advocacy purposes and larger educational initiatives. Screenings can be coordinated through the director and producer, Zelda Edmunds at anemoiaprojects@gmail.com
- 7) **Pax Christi USA Vow of Nonviolence:** To be pronounced privately, with a local peace community, as part of a parish liturgy, or any other way that suits you. Many profess the Vow each year as part of their New Year observance. Printable version available at <http://bit.ly/VowNonvio>
- 8) **Back from the Brink: Call to prevent nuclear war:** Many local and national organizations have endorsed the "Back from the Brink" resolution. Are you associated with a group that might support this? Introduce this resolution at your church, synagogue, civic group, medical association, university, or municipality. <https://www.preventnuclearwar.org/>
- 9) **2018 Midterm Election Voters Guide:** The U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT) hope that you will use this guide as a tool to see how candidates in this next election have responded or plan to respond to the grave sin of human trafficking. <http://bit.ly/USCSAHTGuide>
- 10) **2018 Midterm Election Voter Guide: A Call to Holiness.** A coalition of Catholic organizations created this guide to offer voters reflection on racial justice, the economy, immigration and refugees, healthcare, gun violence prevention, global peacemaking, and the environment. <http://bit.ly/2qoeA8j>
- 11) **Justice for Immigrants National Conference** will be held **December 5-7** in Arlington, Virginia, just outside of Washington, D.C. The last national conference was in 2015 and with the challenges and threats that immigrants and refugees and their families are facing, it is an important moment to convene again. <http://bit.ly/JFI2019>
- 12) **Churches for Middle East Peace Advent Advocacy Summit** on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. on **December 9-10**. <http://bit.ly/2QhqtIx>