



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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

September-October 2022 Vol. 47, No. 5

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

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Pax Christi USA 50th Anniv. Conference

Nuclear disarmament is the issue of the past and future of the Catholic peace movement.

Pax Christi USA held its first national conference in six years in Washington, DC, August 5-7, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the U.S. chapter of the Catholic peace movement. The conference offered opportunities to take stock of Pax Christi's 50 years of work for peace in the United States, and to listen to diverse and youthful voices as participants looked forward to the next 50 years.

The weekend was bookended by an issue that has been a constant for Pax Christi USA since its founding: nuclear disarmament.

The conference was preceded by a showing of the documentary film, "The Berrigans: Devout and Dangerous," about the peace activism of brothers Dan and Phil Berrigan, including their Plowshares actions for nuclear disarmament. In a statement he wrote shortly before dying of cancer in 2002, Phil Berrigan said: "I die with the conviction, held since 1968 and Catonsville, that nuclear weapons are the scourge of the earth; to mine for them, manufacture them, deploy them, use them, is a curse against God, the human family, and the Earth itself."

In the conference keynote, Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, expressed solidarity with this conviction when he explained why, after a visit to Japan where he learned more deeply about the suffering and death caused by the atomic bombs, he wrote his pastoral letter on nuclear disarmament, "Living in the Light of Christ's Peace." "We were the first to build and use nuclear weapons and so we must be part of the process that seeks to dismantle them, making sure that they are never used again," Bishop Wester said.

Also at the conference, Maryknoll Sister Jean Falton and nineteen other Catholic activists were commissioned as "Ambassadors of Peace." Sister Jean's justice and peace ministry began in the late 1970s in Japan, where she first met those who had suffered through the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. "When it comes down to it, people are trying to make us think that nuclear weapons are a protection when they are a danger – the very thing we need to fear," Sr. Jean told the Global Sisters Report in 2014. Over the years, she has carried that message from Japan to churches across the United States and to the United Nations in New York.

Marie Dennis, senior advisor to Pax Christi International, was honored as a Teacher of Peace, and in her address, named nonviolence as the gospel value that connects Pax Christi's various endeavors, from the nuclear issue to racial justice.

"Pax Christi's commitment is to a nonviolence that imitates Jesus' way of life," she said, "but that is also challenged and shaped by the history and contemporary experience of those on the receiving end of war and racism and neglect and planetary destruction."

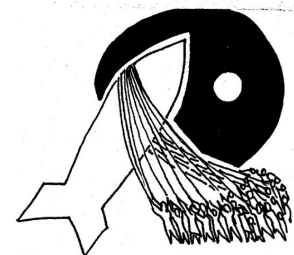
Drawing on the teaching of Franciscan Sister theologian Ilia Delio, who, Dennis said, challenges us to "co-create a world bounded in love," Dennis said she feels hopeful for the next 50 years, despite an awareness gained during the previous 50 years of the ongoing need to address root causes of injustice.

"I believe that we are on the threshold of a new way of being, a new paradigm, a new logic for life. What we are birthing will be closer to the beloved community; it will be anti-racist and socially just. It will be built on right relationships with each other and with the natural world. It will be richly, beautifully diverse and decidedly nonviolent. It will not depend on weapons of war but on right relationships, a commitment to inclusive human dignity and respect for the integrity of creation.

"This new paradigm will be based on a completely different understanding of our place as humans in the whole Earth community — and a recognition that we are latecomers at that to a spectacular cosmic reality that we are just now (thanks to the Hubble and Webb telescopes) beginning to see. It will recognize that diversity and relationality are imbedded in the cosmos and essential to survival on this planet. And it will clearly identify and reject violence in all its forms: armed violence, physical violence, structural and systemic violence, gender and racial violence, cultural, ecological, economic, spiritual and psychological violence."

The conference ended with a nonviolent action at the Pentagon, in which participants prayed for the victims of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and held "peace ribbons" depicting things they "could not bear to imagine being lost in a nuclear war." §

Faith in action: Find full text of conference speeches, video recordings of sessions and workshops, photos and more at the Pax Christi USA website <https://paxchristiusa.org/>



Historic Climate Bill for Green Transition

Climate activists celebrate the passage of the most significant climate bill in the history of the United States while calling for bolder steps to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions and correct environmental injustices suffered by frontline communities.

The cry of the earth has finally been heard in the halls of Congress with the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) – the biggest climate bill in the history of the United States. Without the countless sacrifices of frontline communities and the tireless efforts of environmental activists over decades, this law would not have come into being.

Although the name of the bill hardly reflects its principal focus, the money behind it does. Of the IRA's total spending package of \$437 billion, almost \$370 billion will go to making the transition to clean energy in the United States a reality.

No doubt, the most effective advocate for the IRA was the planet itself. While the Senate debated, stalled, sidelined, shelved, and reconsidered the bill, record heat, rain, drought and wildfires raged.

The winning formula proved to be that of taking a positive approach, providing incentives and funding for the positive steps necessary for healing our Common Home versus a focus on legislating against what will harm it. Billions of dollars will be directed toward investments and incentives for renewable energy projects and technologies, along with climate-smart practices in food systems, forest and coastal management. In addition, the bill will create millions of clean energy jobs over the next decade with provisions for good wages and benefits.

Many aspects of the IRA empower U.S. citizens themselves to take a role in healing the planet through clean energy consumer choices supported by tax incentives. Household electrification and clean energy upgrades will become significantly more affordable for consumers. The bill includes major investments in electric vehicles and offers a \$4,000 consumer tax credit for lower/middle-income individuals to buy used EVs and \$7,500 tax credit to buy new EVs.

All told, the estimate is that these measures will reduce US greenhouse gases by 40% (from 2005 levels) by 2030. Given that the US has historically contributed to 25% global carbon emissions this packs a punch on the world stage. It also dramatically reverses the trend of recent years in which the United States led the race to the bottom in global commitments to reduce toxic emissions and stop the climate crisis.

Another \$60 billion dollars are directed to communities that have been disproportionately affected by our

fossil fuel driven economy, support programs that will clean up pollution and create healthy, toxic-free communities. This is not nearly enough, but a good beginning.

The IRA is far from perfect. It includes tax credits for the questionable technology of carbon capture and sequestration, extending the life of dirty coal plants and exposing residents to toxic coal pollution. It mandates the federal government to offer up parts of the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska's Cook Inlet for oil and gas development. Of great concern is the side deal that was made to move a separate bill for the "permitting reform bill" will affect the Black, Indigenous, low-income, and communities of color that will continue to be disproportionately affected. Stay tuned on how to take a stand on this bill.

One of the greatest victories of the IRA is the proof that people-powered movements can and do work. This bill would not have been possible were it not for the passion, dedication and hard work of so many climate champions - including many reading this article - who have written, talked, walked, prayed and pushed for actions that will heal our Common Home.

All of us should therefore take a moment to savor and celebrate this victory. And then, we need to take a deep breath and write, talk, walk, pray and push some more. While a laudable sum, \$369 billion – it is a ten-year bill that translates to \$37 billion per year, a mere 4% of next year's defense budget of \$840 billion. What battle could be more important for ourselves, for our children for our grandchildren, for our one and only most exquisite planet?§

Faith in action: Send a thank you or follow up letter to your senators about their votes on the Inflation Reduction Act. <https://bit.ly/CatholicClimateCovenantAction>



Edust Voice/CPI

African Climate Dialogues

Community and religious leaders from across the African continent are meeting to discuss personal experiences and perspectives on key topics related to the UN Climate Talks.

As our planet loudly reminds us that time is running out to preserve our common home, the annual UN Climate Change Conference has never been more urgent. This year's gathering (COP 27) in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, brings an important focus to Africa, where Chika Onyejiuwa of Africa Europe Faith Justice Network says "communities are among the most vulnerable to climate change impacts in the world."

Inspired by Pope Francis' call for dialogue through a process called synodality and his *Laudato Si'* encyclical, the international Catholic coalition for social justice known as CIDSE has convened a grassroots space of listening, learning, and raising up solutions to bring to this year's COP. Co-sponsored by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, climate leaders from the DR Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and other African nations have been meeting to share experiences and interchange local solutions. Religious organizations taking part include the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), the *Laudato Si'* Movement, Ecclesial Network for the Congo River Basin (REBAC), Jesuits Conference of Africa and Madagascar, Caritas Africa and others.

"Already we are feeling dire climate impacts and people and ecosystems least able to cope are being hardest hit," said Lydia Machaka, CIDSE Climate Justice and Energy Officer. "COP27 must deliver real and urgent climate action now and we must put our differences aside and unite towards protecting and preserving our common home!"

The virtual dialogues are organized around key themes of the global climate movement, such as false solutions, food systems, climate finance, loss and migration. A joint communiqué will be delivered to COP to eloquently paint this picture of African climate realities and powerfully raise up effective local solutions.

The first session, held in July, focused on the issue of false climate solutions. Panelists from Mozambique, Uganda, and the DR Congo shared concerns about the climate solutions proposed for and in Africa, namely that they do not protect and preserve environmental integrity nor promote climate resilience as intended but instead threaten the remaining natural resources in Africa, particularly in the Congo Basin.

"Our land is being attacked," said Henry Muhiya, the coordinator in DR Congo for REBAC. He went on to share how wealthy nations scramble for the miner-

als needed in the transition to clean energy, and lands rich in these resources, such as in the DR Congo, find themselves suffering violence and displacement in the process. True solutions, according to Muhiya, are not supported by governments but will come from aligning environmental and human rights interests together.

Another much-banded climate solution – that of forest conservation – was debated by those being affected. Umor Isua-Ikoh of the Peace Point Development Foundation in Nigeria shared the plight of communities at the hands of the anti-deforestation taskforce of the UN Deforestation and Forest Degradation program. In what he called a "new form of colonialism," the UN program allowed the Nigerian government to collect over five million dollars in fines from apprehended violators, while the community eventually lost its forest. "They became strangers to their own land," he said, estimating that over 600,000 people lost "their place of worship, watershed, source of traditional livelihood, and water source that they and their ancestors had preserved for over 5,000 years."

The second session of the African Climate Dialogue, held on Aug. 10, focused on food systems and agriculture, a category that is estimated to contribute 19-29% of total greenhouse gas emissions. Agriculture is also extremely vulnerable to climate change as witnessed in Africa where millions from the Sahel, the Horn and the East of Africa are experiencing acute food insecurity due to unreliable rainfall. Participants shared effective, on-the-ground experiences of agroecology, along with the imperative to include agroecology as a food systems approach in Nationally Determined Contributions at COP 27.

Three more sessions are scheduled to be held before the end of September.

One of the most hopeful aspects of the African Climate Dialogues is the space for young voices. As Francisca Ziniel of the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESIA) said, "ensuring that a majority of them are there and have a say when decisions about their future are made is imperative to changing the tide and inducing the much-needed change. Young people have the numbers, the capacity, and the solutions to address the global challenges confronting the world." §

Faith in action: Follow the African Climate Dialogues at <https://bit.ly/AfricanClimateDialogues>

Tanzania: Threats to Maasai lands

Increasing threats to Maasai lands raise concerns of a systematic landgrab from indigenous pastoral peoples.

In northern Tanzania, more than 70,000 Indigenous Maasai pastoralists are facing eviction from ancestral grazing land that the government plans to lease to a UAE-based company to create a wildlife corridor for trophy hunting and elite tourism.

As previously reported in NewsNotes, violence erupted on June 8 in Loliondo, a vast wildland on the northeastern boundary of the Serengeti plains. Numerous videos on Twitter showed police firing live ammunition on the Maasai who had gathered for a protest meeting to demand the government remove boundary posts newly erected on Maasai land for the new game reserve, which includes the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, a protected area and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

“Our homeland has been turned into a hunting park, with wealthy people coming in to hunt the wildlife,” representatives of the Maasai said in a statement at the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in Nairobi, Kenya, on June 23.

The Oakland Institute, an international policy think tank based in California, released a statement on July 27 after the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet visited Tanzania, saying the UN and donor countries should not trust the government and should visit the Maasai communities under threat.

“A pervasive climate of fear remains among the displaced whose lives have been completely upended,” said Anuradha Mittal, Executive Director of the Oakland Institute.

The Oakland Institute reports that more than 2,000 Maasai, displaced by the violence by the police, remain in Kenya, suffering from hunger and living in fear. Approximately 70,000 people have lost access to dry-season grazing land needed for their livestock. In addition to the 31 people who were shot and sustained injuries, 107 people needed care after the violence.

The International Land Coalition has a petition to Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan with three asks:

- Desist from evicting the Maasai indigenous pastoralists and respect their customary land rights
- Ensure that land tenure of the concerned communities in Ngorongoro, Loliondo and Sale is protected
- Recognize indigenous peoples’ land rights and their economic, cultural and environmental security

More than a thousand kilometers away, in southern Maasailand in Tanzania, Maasai in Kiteto district are facing another threat to their land: the construction of

the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), set to be the longest heated oil pipeline in the world. The Ugandan and Tanzanian governments signed final agreements on the construction of the pipeline in 2020 and hired French company Total (recently renamed TotalEnergies) to start development in 2021. Once completed, the pipeline will run 900 miles, transporting more than 23,000 tons of crude oil from Uganda to Tanzania daily, mostly for export and at great profit for the two governments.

The environmental and human impacts of the EACOP will be extensive and many fear, not properly addressed. “Voices from Tanzania” research in 2019 by Pilot Light Development Organization (a Tanzanian NGO representing Maasai communities in Arusha and Manyara regions) details concerns the Kiteto communities have about the pipeline: loss of wet and dry season grazing areas, vegetation that prevents soil erosion, medicinal plants and Maasai temporary homesteads.

Also, the presence of large groups of construction workers on similar projects around the world have been known to bring promiscuous behavior, communicable and infectious diseases, and violence against women. There are also concerns about waste management. One respondent in the study wondered “We Maasai don’t use paper or have food waste. Where will the waste go? Into our wells, forests, grazing areas and wetlands?”

Communities also expressed concern at the lack of participation and consultation, despite this being a key pillar of the EACOP-proposed mitigation plans. In Kiteto district, affected communities reported that there has been no official dialogue with EACOP since the first information seminars in 2016.

Environmental groups are fighting back, taking TotalEnergies to court for misleading customers by violating its climate pledge to reach-zero by 2050. In March, four environmental groups—Greenpeace France, Friends of the Earth France, Notre Affaire a Tous, and Client Earth—filed a lawsuit alleging that the company is misleading consumers and shareholders about its continued reliance on fossil fuels. They argue that TotalEnergies’ advertisements about new investments in wind and solar energy are illegal under French law.

“It is unimaginable and unconscionable to be pushing a project like this,” said Landry Ninteretse of the Africa branch of 350, an international climate advocacy group. EACOP, he said, is set to be a “climate bomb.”§

Faith in action: <https://bit.ly/MaasaiLandPetition> and <https://www.stopeacop.net/>

Guatemala Emergency Human Rights Delegation

Growing crackdown on political dissent amid already significant corruption and human rights abuses raise concerns of authoritarianism.

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns participated in an emergency human rights delegation to Guatemala July 23-30, organized by the Guatemalan Human Rights Commission. Participants met with human rights defenders, journalists, communities of resistance, the outgoing Guatemalan human rights ombudsman, and officials from the United States Embassy.

Delegates heard repeatedly about the takeover of public institutions and a rise in corruption, human rights abuses, and authoritarianism by what many described as a “criminal alliance” of oligarchs, political elites, organized crime, and state security forces.

Much of the violence and corruption in Guatemala is fueled by international mining interests. Impoverished communities are often violently evicted from their homes to make way for mining. The government may take part directly – the delegation witnessed a large concentration of police gathering to carry out one mass eviction. But even where privately hired paramilitaries physically remove families, corrupt officials leave victims with little legal recourse.

The delegation met with Doña Adela, who had been attacked and run out of her home near a nickel mine in the town of El Estor. Doña Adela and her husband, Maya Q’ueqchi Indigenous spiritual guides, lead traditional rituals highlighting the people’s connection to nature and the need to protect the land for future generations. The mining company, owned by Swiss-Russian Solway Group, has been attempting to expropriate her family farm. Local leaders loyal to Solway accused the couple of witchcraft.

On May 16, hired hitmen entered Doña Adela’s home, held her captive for 24 hours, beat her, doused her in gasoline and threatened to burn her if she didn’t pay them \$250,000, then burned down the house. The family is currently in hiding. She explained that they have tried to pursue legal charges with the Public Ministry but have received no response.

Business leaders and prosecutors frequently make spurious criminal accusations against targeted individuals. The delegation heard firsthand accounts of such “criminalization” throughout the country. Targets told of being smeared online by government-run misinformation “troll farms,” threatened with arrest and forced to go into hiding, or convicted and given harsh sentences for crimes they could not possibly have committed.

Human rights and land defenders are criminalized,

as are journalists, independent prosecutors and judges. Many of Guatemala’s top jurists have fled to the United States. They are then replaced with lawyers and judges who will protect corrupt officials and pursue more spurious cases.

After peace accords were signed in 1996, ending 36 years of armed conflict in Guatemala, the country embarked on a process of transitional justice in which military personnel and even former heads of state had been successfully prosecuted. The UN-backed International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), established in 2006, played a key role until 2019, when then-president Jimmy Morales announced that anti-corruption cases would be moved to the Public Ministry. Current President Alejandro Giammattei has continued to dismantle the transitional justice apparatus, naming Consuelo Porras to a second term as Attorney General in charge of the Public Ministry after she was placed on the U.S. Department of State’s “Engel List” of corrupt officials.

The delegation witnessed 69 individuals including 40 children living in hiding in a few cramped rooms. One man told the delegation how his entire community had been evicted from their homes and criminalized. He and his wife had a three-week-old daughter when they were forced to flee. She is now four months old and still “has no name,” as he and his wife fear being arrested on bogus charges if they bring her to the civil registry office. He said, “We are no longer living in the 1980s. We signed the peace accords. But it is not working. They are still trying to kill us.”

In a meeting with MOGC, Maryknoll Sisters and Affiliates in Guatemala confirmed the desperate situation the delegation had witnessed. Sr. Silvia Pacheco, MM quoted a recent column in the Guatemalan newspaper *El Periodico* that said, “The ‘ideology’ of the state is corruption.” In the final hours of the delegation’s visit, the offices of *El Periodico* were raided, and the paper’s managing editor José Rubén Zamora was arrested.

The delegation witnessed hope and inspiring acts of resistance by many Guatemalans, but the political situation in the country is increasingly desperate. §

Faith in Action: Read the official report on the delegation <https://www.ghrc-usa.org/> and a statement by the Maryknoll Affiliates at <https://bit.ly/MKAGuatemala>



Nicaragua: Bishop Critical of Ortega Arrested

After silencing the press and closing most NGOs, Ortega's Sandinista government goes after the only influential independent organization left in Nicaragua – the Catholic Church.

The government of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, has intensified its attacks on the Catholic Church, arresting Matagalpa Bishop Rolando Alvarez, five priests, two seminarians and one lay man on August 19, in a dramatic pre-dawn raid on the diocesan headquarters where the men had been effectively under house arrest for two weeks, surrounded by police and unable to leave. Church bells rang out in alarm as the prisoners were removed from the residence by police.

The men were taken to Managua, where the 55 year-old bishop was placed under official house arrest in the home of his parents, while the others were sent to the Managua prison known as “El Chipote,” where the Ortega-Murillo regime is keeping over 190 political prisoners. Perhaps not coincidentally, Alvarez has vocally condemned the prison, calling for the inmates’ release.

The church leaders are accused of “taking advantage of their condition as religious leaders, utilizing the media and social networks trying to organize violent groups, inciting them to carry out acts of hate against the population, provoking an atmosphere of unease and disorder, affecting the peace and harmony in the community, with the aim of destabilizing the Nicaraguan State and attacking the Constitutional authorities.” Authorities have provided no evidence of organizing violence.

The arrests mark the latest in a string of repressive measures against the Catholic Church in Nicaragua, especially since the brutal crackdown on massive protests across the country in 2018. In recent months bishops and priests have been threatened and forced into exile, 12 Catholic radio stations have been shuttered, and Mother Teresa’s Missionaries of Charity were expelled from the country. Bishop Alvarez has been a prominent critic of these acts of repression.

Ortega once enjoyed the support of significant church figures in Nicaragua. When his Sandinista party first took power in 1979, four priests served in the government, including Maryknoll Father Miguel D’Escoto, who was Ortega’s foreign minister. When the 2018 protests began, Ortega turned to the Catholic Church and to Alvarez himself to mediate a dialogue between the government and protesters, but that mediation effort broke down when church leaders insisted the government address demands for greater democracy.

Church authorities across the Americas and beyond

have responded to the latest arrests with statements of condemnation and expressions of solidarity with Bishop Alvarez and the other detained men, and with the Church in Nicaragua and all the Nicaraguan people.

The Bishops Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean, CELAM, issued a statement of solidarity on August 6, when Alvarez and his colleagues were first detained in Matagalpa. The conference, it says, “joins in the suffering of the great people of Nicaragua and the pilgrim Church in that beloved land, her faithful and pastors, under the constant harassment they are suffering at the hands of government authorities.

“The latest events, such as the siege of priests and bishops, the expulsion of religious congregations, the desecration of temples and the closure of radio stations causes us deep pain. We express our solidarity and closeness.”

The CELAM statement has been followed by similar statements from around the world. The bishops conference of Central America, and in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Mexico, Peru, El Salvador, Spain, and Venezuela, as well as the chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishop’s Committee on International Justice and Peace, and the California Catholic Conference issued statements condemning the Ortega-Murillo government’s actions and expressing solidarity with the Nicaraguan church and people.

The Vatican’s response has been more muted, as the pope and Holy See seek always to leave open the possibility of dialogue, and to avoid exacerbating tensions. But on August 12, at a special session of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) in which the body condemned the Nicaraguan government’s actions, the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the OAS, Msgr. Juan Antonio Cruz, expressed “concern” over the situation, and called for dialogue and mutual understanding rooted in “respect and mutual trust, seeking above all the common good and peace.”

Pope Francis also expressed his concern during his August 21st Angelus remarks. “I am following closely, with concern and sorrow, the situation created in Nicaragua that involves persons and institutions,” Francis told the crowd in St. Peter’s Square. “I would like to express my conviction and my hope that, through an open and sincere dialogue, the basis for a respectful and peaceful co-existence might still be found.” §

Brazil: Record Violence Against Indigenous

The Brazilian bishops say record-high violence and rights violations may have made 2021 the “worst year of the century” for Indigenous peoples.

A new report by the Brazilian bishops’ Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI) describes the record-high number of invasions and attacks against Indigenous communities and leaders as a reflection of “the institutional environment of offensive against the constitutional rights of native peoples.” Released on Aug. 17, the report, entitled “Violence Against Indigenous Peoples of Brazil: Data from 2021,” says invasions and mining on Indigenous lands have increased by 180% since Jan. 1, 2019, when President Jair Bolsonaro took office.

As president, Jair Bolsonaro has carried out his campaign promises to diminish indigenous lands and open the Amazon for more mining and other types of exploitation. The result has been catastrophic for indigenous communities and the environment.

The Brazilian constitution of 1988 radically changed the government’s relations with indigenous populations. While previous laws aimed at “integrating” them into the rest of society, the new constitution recognized indigenous rights to land as original and in existence prior to the state and calls for the government to protect indigenous cultures, ways of life and livelihoods. The constitution established a five-year period to demarcate all indigenous lands, yet only 535 territories claimed by indigenous have been demarcated, with more than 800 territories awaiting official recognition by the government.

Bolsonaro’s first act as president was to rearrange federal ministries, placing the government’s Indigenous protection agency FUNAI under the purview of the Agriculture ministry, home to those who most covet indigenous lands for commercial farming. The change was later reversed by the Supreme Court, sending the agency back to the Justice ministry, but it showed the president’s intentions.

As a presidential candidate in 2016, Bolsonaro made his disdain for indigenous people clear in a number of disparaging remarks, even complaining, “It’s a shame that the Brazilian cavalry hasn’t been as efficient as the Americans, who exterminated the Indians.” He repeatedly promised that if he won the election, “there will not be one more centimeter of indigenous land” and that these lands needed to be opened to economic activities like mining, timber, agriculture, raising livestock, and tourism. Regrettably, this is one of his promises that he has followed through on; in three years not one territory has been officially recognized.

He has also followed through on his promise to “serve a blow to FUNAI, a blow to the neck.” Bolsonaro chose former federal police chief Marcelo Xavier da Silva, a close friend to large landowners, to lead FUNAI. He quickly filled the agency leadership with career police and military personnel, especially in the Amazon where they occupy 58 percent of coordinator roles vs. 27 percent in other regions.

Da Silva significantly changed the agency’s role in April 2020, declaring that the agency would only protect territories that had finished the process of demarcation, thus opening almost 25 million acres to conflict over ownership and leaving hundreds of communities without protection. This decision was also overruled by the Supreme Court, but the agency continues to be “transformed from a protection agency to one that exposes indigenous people and territories to different violations,” according to CIMI.

Since that declaration, FUNAI has certified 415 ranches containing nearly 600,000 acres in indigenous territories, and it is not only a question of some land overlapping indigenous lands. An investigation by Agencia Publica found that the majority of the ranches were 100 percent inside indigenous territories. While indigenous communities have been waiting decades for their lands to be recognized, these ranches were approved in a matter of days or weeks. For example, the Terena people in Mato Grosso do Sul have been waiting for demarcation for more than 40 years, but a 19,000 acre luxury resort had its claim for the same land approved in less than two months.

Deforestation in the Amazon and elsewhere set records each year and Bolsonaro aims to pave an old, often impassable road in the middle of the Amazon that will accelerate deforestation in the region significantly more.

“The destruction is so vast now that the eastern Amazon, just east of Xingu basin, has ceased to be a carbon sink... and has converted into a carbon source,” according to a 2021 study published in the journal Nature.

In contrast to Bolsonaro, Pope Francis has described Indigenous peoples as a “living cry of hope” and a people who “know what it is to listen to the earth, to see the earth, to touch the earth.” They remind us that we have a shared responsibility to care for our common home. “And if certain decisions taken so far have ruined it.” he said, “it is never too late to learn lessons and acquire a new way of life.”§

Venezuelan Migrants in Panama's Darién Gap

Maryknoll Sisters issue urgent call for short-term volunteers to care for migrants in the juggle of Panama.

Panama's Darién Gap, a 5,000 square kilometer expanse of hostile jungle terrain that links Colombia to Panama has often been referred to as the "plug" between South and Central America. By virtue of its almost impenetrable terrain of steep mountains, dangerous rivers, and non-existent roads, few ever dared to pass through it.

That plug has been pulled, due to the desperation of tens of thousands of migrants seeking a viable path to the United States. More than ten times as many migrants passed through this area in 2021 compared to the previous year, and numbers are doubling monthly.

While the migrants hail from around the world, some from as far as Senegal, it is the migrants from just one country who are massively descending upon the Darién Gap's vast jungle, sometimes dying in the process. That nation is Venezuela. More Venezuelans crossed the Darién Gap in the first two months of 2022 than in all of 2021.

A little over a decade ago, Venezuela was Latin America's wealthiest nation, home to the world's largest oil reserves and to millions of Latin American refugees who fled repression and dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s. Venezuela's massive social, political and economic crisis of the past eight years turned that reality upside down.

As poverty and hunger surged in 2015, an enormous wave of Venezuelan migration was set into motion, with almost a fifth of the nation now gone. Most headed to other Latin American nations, often walking to countries as distant as Chile. But as nations tightened their entrance restrictions (with the notable exception of Colombia which recently granted legal status to 1.7 million migrants) many Venezuelan migrants have turned their sights to the United States. Some are leaving behind the countries where they originally sought refuge. Others are just now leaving Venezuela. Despite minor economic improvement in the past year, two thirds of Venezuelans are still trapped by extreme poverty.

With daily wages around \$3, most Venezuelans are unable to afford a safe mode of transit to try to reach the United States. They are opting to take their risks through the jungle, making their way to the town of Capurganá in neighboring Colombia, the jumping off point to the

Darién. They then face ten more days of a grueling journey.

"Deep in the jungle, robbery, rape, and human trafficking are as dangerous as wild animals, insects and the absolute lack of safe drinking water," says Jean Gough, regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean at the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

In a report by Doctors Without Borders, nineteen-year-old Venezuelan migrant Angel said "I saw at least 10 dead bodies in the jungle. But the worst is the people who get left behind—people who cannot climb the mountains or who slip in the rain and mud. It is a route where nobody waits. You see people sitting down, injured, who might have been there for days, waiting for death."

If they do get through, this is only a beginning. Before them lies a 2,500-mile journey through six Central American countries, often impossible to cross legally – before they get to the U.S. border. There awaits another enormous challenge.

For the most part, the United States, and the world, has ignored the desperate situation of Venezuelan migrants. Although Venezuela is the source of the world's largest external migrant exodus in recent years – second only to Syria – Venezuelan migrants have received a fraction of global aid. The

Brookings Institute shared the shocking statistic that, by the end of 2020, Venezuelan migrants had received \$265 per migrant as compared to \$3,150 per Syrian.

Among those responding to this flood of migrants are the Maryknoll Sisters, who have worked for decades in the Darién and are now opening the doors of their Pastoral Care Center. There, Sisters Jocelyn "Joji" Fenix and Melinda Roper regularly train health promoters and preserve 100 acres of native rainforest.

Now, they are turning their energies to preserve lives forgotten by the world and almost devoured by Darién's jungle. They are urgently seeking immediate short-term help from volunteers who can commit to two weeks to a month. While Spanish speakers are preferred, anyone who can wash the feet and wounds of migrants who have walked long distances would be helpful. §

Faith in action: To inquire about volunteering, email cpastoralsantafe@gmail.com



Haiti: No to Military Intervention

Civil society leaders say repeating the mistakes of the past will not solve Haiti's sociopolitical crisis today.

On August 19, the Quixote Center, a social justice organization in Washington, DC, working for systemic change in Haiti, released a statement opposing military intervention in the long-suffering Caribbean country, as the sociopolitical crisis and calls for intervention, grow. The following is an excerpt.

... “Over the last two years, Haitian civil society organizations have been engaged in extensive dialogue about governance. The Commission in Search of a Haitian Solution to the Crisis grew out of this process.

“At the time the Commission launched its work in January of 2021, Jovenel Moïse was still president and ruling by decree. The international community, led by the United States government, continued to throw its weight behind Moïse, despite the deteriorating security situation, the Moïse government’s evident complicity in much of the violence, and his regime’s setting aside of constitutional rule.

“It is the international community’s utter neglect of democratic principles in propping up Moïse that led to the current crisis. In contrast, the Commission’s work has succeeded in furthering a civil society dialogue that cuts across historic ideological divides. Thus, the very thing Louis Almagro [secretary general of the Organization of American States] and others suggest can’t happen without international intervention, is happening now, and has been happening for at least 18 months!

“Haiti does not need a UN force to invade to create the space for dialogue. What is needed is for the international community to back off its unquestioning support for [Prime Minister Ariel] Henry so that the current government will engage honestly in the already existing dialogue.

“In addition, we note that Haiti’s last experience with military intervention, under MINUSTAH [the UN Mission to Stabilize Haiti], was a disaster. People are widely familiar with the UN force’s introduction of cholera in 2010, and the widespread sexual violence and exploitation that occurred as the result of the occupation.

“Often forgotten today, however, is that MINUSTAH forces engaged in other gross human rights violations. For example, over the course of 18 months, UN soldiers launched attacks on Port-au-Prince’s poorest neighborhoods, including a series of massive assaults on Cite Soleil in which dozens of civilians were killed.” ... “[T]he occupation only deepened the crisis of insecurity by further entrenching collaboration between economic and political elites, the police, and armed groups. There

is no reason to believe a new UN military intervention would act any different.

“So, what can the international community do?

“First, the United States can step back from its unquestioning support for the de facto government of Ariel Henry. A Haitian-led solution is the only way that stability returns. And, the only way this can happen is if the United States changes course.

“Second, an agreement on governance has to be implemented, and insecurity could be a major obstacle. But the agreement on governance has to come first, then insecurity can be addressed through the mechanisms established.”...

“Thirdly, long-term insecurity must be addressed as a structural problem. Gangs are a symptom of multiple, cross cutting crises: Rapid urbanization, under-resourcing of public services including public education, and a lack of employment opportunities, leading to long-term extreme poverty.

“The international community has contributed greatly to these problems through years of mandated structural adjustment policies that have gutted the public sector in Haiti in exchange for debt servicing agreements. The international community should cancel much of Haiti’s international debt...” ...

“Fourth, where the gangs operate, listen to the peace-makers. People in troubled communities like Cite Soleil, Martissant, and elsewhere want peace. They know the history of their communities. They know gang members and they understand what drives the problem. They know what has worked in their communities and what has not. Listen to them!”...

“Fifth, the United States and regional governments need to do more to reign in illegal gun sales to Haiti. Gun sales to Haiti are supposed to be highly restricted and monitored already, but the system is clearly broken. The United States must evaluate, fix, and enforce this system alongside officials from Haiti and the Dominican Republic.” ...

“Recognizing the failures of past interventions, while promoting future ones, makes no sense. The international community must get on another track in Haiti; one that respects the initiative of Haitian civil society who are right now trying to build a more democratic future.”§

Faith in action: Sign the petition to end U.S. expulsions of asylum-seekers to Haiti <https://bit.ly/QuixotePetitionHaiti>

Philippines: Take Action to Protect Human Rights

Members of Congress and human rights activists raised concerns leading up to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken meeting with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with new Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., son of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, in Manila on Aug. 6.

Without mentioning documented harassment of journalists, red-tagging of religious and labor leaders, and or killings by police and military forces, Blinken described the U.S. relationship with the Philippines as “extraordinary” and said the United States stands ready to work with Pres. Marcos in areas of defense, climate change and controlling the COVID-19 pandemic.

Three weeks earlier, the House passed an amendment prohibiting assistance to the Philippine National Police (PNP).

The amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), introduced by Rep. Susan Wild of Pennsylvania, mirrors language from the Philippine Human Rights Act, limiting assistance to the Philippine National Police until human rights requirements are met.

The requirements include that U.S. agencies certify that they have “investigated and successfully prosecuted members of the PNP who have violated human rights” and “established that the PNP effectively protect the rights of trade unionists, journalists, human rights defenders, critics of the government, faith and religious leaders and other civil society activists.”

In remarks on the House floor, Rep. Wild said U.S. tax dollars should not be used to supply weapons, training, and other forms of assistance to Philippine state security forces in light of their responsibility in far-reaching and violent human rights violations.

“After an estimated 30,000 extrajudicial killings in the Philippines between 2016 and today, after the assassinations, arbitrary arrests, torture, and red-tagging of labor organizers and oppositions leaders, after former President Duterte’s calls for assassinating politically engaged bishops, and after the Philippines has been named year after year by the International Trade Union Confederation as one of the world’s 10 most repressive countries for the labor movement and workers, the time is long overdue to begin putting some basic human rights guardrails in place in the United States-Philippines relationship,” Wild said.

The day before Sec. Blinken’s meeting with Pres. Marcos, Brandon Lee, a U.S. citizen, journalist and activist who was shot in the Philippines in a suspected extrajudicial assassination attempt three years earlier, released a recorded video message to President Biden

about the visit.

“Hello, President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken. My name is Brandon Lee and I am a Chinese American and a U.S. citizen who was born and raised in San Francisco, California. For nine years, I lived in the Philippines with my wife and daughter. I was an environmentalist, human rights volunteer and community-based journalist, writing to protect the indigenous people against the development aggression on their land and livelihood.

“In response to my advocacy and activism, Philippine military harassed, intimidated, and threatened me. I was under constant surveillance for five years and on August 6th of 2019, they shot me in front of my family. I nearly died. I suffered eight cardiac arrests and now I’m a quadriplegic. I cannot use my hands or my legs. I’m paralyzed from the chest down.

“Since that fateful day, my family has been forced to flee our home for safety. And thanks to the U.S. government and many of my friends and supporters who financially contributed to my medical evacuation, I was able to fly back to San Francisco. We are back in the U.S., far from the Philippine military.

“But until now, three years after the attempted assassination of my life, there has been no investigation or accountability. And my colleagues back in the coalition in the Philippines continue to be in grave danger.

“I just learned that Secretary of State Antony Blinken will be meeting with the new Marcos regime. And, on August 6th, which marks three years since the day the Philippine military tried to assassinate me, I would like to request that Secretary Blinken raise the critical issue of human rights to the new Philippine administration.

“As you know, in the last six years under President Duterte, the Philippine military and police have killed over 30,000 people with impunity. In the first month under Marcos, there have been illegal arrest of activists and indiscriminate killings of activists. A 9-year-old was even killed in a military house-to-house search operation.

“The U.S. Philippine relationship should not only be based on economic and military interest but most importantly, on the respect for human rights, justice, and accountability to its people. Thank you in advance for considering this request. I hope to hear back from you.”§

Faith in action: Ask Congress to pass the Philippines Human Rights Act. <https://bit.ly/PHRA2022>

UN report: Global hunger still rising

World hunger and severe food insecurity grew in 2021, making the world's goal of achieving "zero hunger" by 2030 even more unlikely.

The latest State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report from the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and four other UN-related agencies states “we are moving in the wrong direction,” and predicts that in 2030 there will still be 670 million people affected by hunger, the same number as in 2015 when the Sustainable Development Goals targeted an end to hunger by 2030. The report highlights the extent of the problem, the many inter-related challenges to overcoming hunger, and offers some recommendations for governments.

The report points out that targets for ending hunger, food insecurity, and all forms of malnutrition are not being met, with progress recorded only for exclusive breastfeeding for children under six months and for child stunting. It identifies conflict, including the war in Ukraine, along with climate extremes, economic shocks, and growing inequalities as the major drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition.

“The global price spikes in food, fuel and fertilizers that we are seeing as a result of the crisis in Ukraine threaten to push countries around the world into famine,” said World Food Program Executive Director David Beasley. He warned that this could result in “global destabilization, starvation, and mass migration on an unprecedented scale.”

Some of the findings of the report are:

828 million people were facing hunger in 2021, 46 million more than 2020 and 150 million more than in 2019;

29.3% of the world’s population, or 2.3 billion people, were moderately or severely food insecure in 2021, representing an increase of 350 million since before the outbreak of the Covid pandemic. Of this number 924 million faced severe food insecurity in 2021.

The gender gap increased: the global percentage of those moderately or severely food insecure were women 31.9%, versus men 27.6%. Anemia is a special problem for women; the number of women aged 15 to 49 with anemia was estimated be almost 30% in 2019, representing an increase from 493 million in 2000 to 571 million in 2019. This has implications for female morbidity and mortality and can lead to adverse pregnancy and newborn outcomes.

3.1 billion people could not afford a healthy diet in 2020, an increase of 112 million from 2019; this reflects the inflationary effects of the Covid pandemic combined with the extreme climatic impacts on food production

globally.

In contrast, adult obesity nearly doubled from 343 million in 2000 to 675 million in 2016, or 13.1% of the global population. Updated statistics on obesity will be released at the end of 2022.

A glaring paradox of hunger among children under five was that 149 million (22%) were stunted whereas 39 million (5.7%) were overweight.

45 million children aged five or younger were affected by wasting – a form of malnutrition that increases risk of death by 12 times.

One problem is that price support for agriculture goes primarily to producers with relatively little going to consumers. Furthermore, the types of crops subsidized are primarily grains and little goes to the more nutritious foods, such as fruit, vegetables and foods high in fiber.

The report examines various scenarios of public support to the food and agriculture sector to promote affordable, healthy diets. An empirically grounded observation has shown that the objective of promoting the production of nutritious foods would contribute to making a healthy diet less costly globally and particularly in middle-income countries. Actions required are not only transferring subsidies from producers of grain staples to consumers, but also removing or reducing border and market price controls for healthy foods. A further benefit is reduction in global greenhouse emissions.

Targeting subsidies to consumers of “high priority” foods will also lead to an increase in farm income in low-income countries, benefitting small farmers, women and youth, and result in a reduction in both extreme poverty and malnourishment. The trade-off is that income for producers of grain staples will decline, but this will affect mainly high-income countries.

Two major challenges for low-income countries with low government budgets will be how to provide general services support to producers of nutritious foods and subsidies to consumers of high-priority foods. The report concludes: “Strong institutions on a local, national and global level will be crucial, as well as engaging and incentivizing stakeholders from the public sector, the private sector and international organizations to support the repurposing efforts.”§

Faith in action: Ask Congress to oppose the terrorist designation of six Palestinian human rights organizations. <https://bit.ly/HR751>

Israel Palestine: Palestinian NGOs closed

Ask Congress to oppose the terrorist designation of six Palestinian human rights organizations.

In the early morning hours of August 18, Israeli forces raided and ordered closed the six Palestinian human rights organizations earlier deemed by the Israeli government as "terrorist" organizations.

This move comes ten months after Benny Gantz, the Israeli Defense Minister, signed an executive order designating the groups as "terrorist" organizations.

The six organizations are: Addameer, al-Haq, Defense for Children International Palestine (DCIP), the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, the Bisan Center for Research and Development, and the Union

of Palestinian Women Committees. The executive order did not provide any public evidence to substantiate these claims.

Many of these human rights organizations work closely with the international community to develop Palestinian civil society, document human rights violations, and defend Palestinians in Israeli courts. §

Faith in action: Ask your representatives to co-sponsor HR 751 opposing the terrorist designation by Israel of six Palestinian human rights organizations <https://bit.ly/HR751>

Support the Justice for Shireen Act

August 19 marked 100 days since the killing of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu-Akleh. Shireen was wearing a flak jacket with the word PRESS clearly marked when she was shot and killed while reporting on an Israeli military operation in the West Bank city of Jenin. She was an American citizen, but so far the U.S. government has made no effort to identify and hold anyone accountable for her killing.

On July 28, U.S. Rep. André Carson of Indiana announced that he would introduce the Justice for Shireen Act which will require the U.S. government to determine who killed her and whether U.S. assistance was used, and to make that information public. §

Faith in action: Ask Congress to support the Justice for Shireen Act. <https://bit.ly/Justice4ShireenAct>

Afghan Refugees Need Our Support

More than 75,000 Afghans in the United States risk becoming undocumented if Congress does not take action.

One year after the fall of Kabul, a bipartisan group of senators and representatives introduced legislation in both houses of Congress in August to allow Afghan evacuees to adjust their status to lawful permanent residency. The bill, known as the Afghan Adjustment Act, has been a focus for months of immigrant rights groups, veterans groups, and refugee resettlement agencies, including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

If enacted into law, the bill would create a streamlined process for Afghans who entered the United States with humanitarian parole to apply for lawful permanent resident status.

Bishop Mario Dorsonville, chairman of the US-CCB's Committee on Migration, sent a letter of support for the legislation, stating, "[I]t is both our moral duty and in our country's best interest to provide our new Afghan neighbors with a pathway to permanent legal status."

Following the U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, tens of thousands of U.S.-affiliated and at-risk Afghans were evacuated to the United States via "humanitarian parole," a temporary allowance

to enter and remain in the United States for one or two years. Despite receiving this life-saving evacuation, Afghans under this status now live under a cloud of legal uncertainty, without a clear path to build a life in the United States.

To resolve this, Congress needs to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act, patterned after similar adjustment acts passed following previous U.S. wartime evacuations, including for Cubans after the rise of Castro, Southeast Asians after the Fall of Saigon, and Iraqi Kurds during the rule of Saddam Hussein.

Without an Afghan Adjustment Act, tens of thousands of Afghans who were evacuated to safety by the U.S. military will have to submit new asylum claims. They will find themselves in a broken immigration system that is expensive and arduous, made harder by a long backlog and the need for applicants to show more documentation, a requirement particularly difficult for Afghans who were forced to destroy their papers to avoid violence from the Taliban as they fled Kabul. §

Faith in action: Tell Congress to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act <https://bit.ly/AfghanAAct>

Resources

- 1) **Season of Creation Celebration Guide for Sept. 1 – Oct. 4** from an ecumenical group of partners committed to pray, collaborate and mobilize to care for our common home. <https://seasonofcreation.org/>
- 2) **“Eco-Spirituality: Behold God in Everything!”** – a free 90-minute program for the Feast of St. Francis on Oct. 4 of prayers, readings, reflection/discussion questions, optional music, a Franciscan contemplation exercise, a short video, and suggested activities. Offered by the Catholic Climate Covenant. <https://bit.ly/EcoSpirituality>
- 3) **Catholic Nonviolence Days of Action**, sponsored by Pax Christi International, **Sept. 21 – Oct. 2**. The theme is “Blessed Every Step Toward Nonviolence.” Find events at <https://bit.ly/NonviolenceDays22>
- 4) **Maryknoll Webinars:** Sept. 13 with Maryknoll Lay Missioner Peg Vamosy in El Salvador. Oct. 19 with Fr. John Barth in Thailand. <https://www.maryknoll.us/Resources/webinars>
- 5) **New Maryknoll Sisters Podcast:** Living Off the Land in Panama with Sr. Melinda Roper. <https://bit.ly/MKSrPodcast>
- 6) **“A Retreat on Gospel Nonviolence”** – a free 25-minute video with guided questions from Pax Christi International to be used by individuals and small groups. Enter the Password: PC2022 (with English/Spanish/French caption options on Play bar, under button "CC"): <https://vimeo.com/741274721>
- 7) **Archbishop John Wester’s keynote address** on nuclear disarmament at the Pax Christi USA 50th Anniversary Conference 2022. <https://bit.ly/WesterKeynote>
- 8) **Marie Dennis’s Teacher of Peace 2022 acceptance speech** at the Pax Christi USA 50th Anniversary Conference <https://bit.ly/MDennisSpeech>
- 9) **Prayer for Integration of All New Comers** from the USCCB Migration and Refugee Services <https://bit.ly/PrayerforNewComers>
- 10) **Video recordings of "Catholic Peacebuilding in Times of Crisis: Hope for a Wounded World"** conference held online June 20-23 are available by the Catholic Peacebuilding Network. This includes a special presentation message from Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, Permanent Observer of the Holy See Mission to the UN. <https://bit.ly/CPN2022videos>
- 11) **The newest issue of the Journal of Social Encounters** offers a collection of essays on Christian bishops as peacebuilders. <https://bit.ly/JournalSocEnco>
- 12) **Kenyan religious leaders joint call for peace** in the country after the presidential election on Aug. 15. <https://bit.ly/KenyaPeaceMessage>
- 13) **Webinar: War in Ukraine: Symposium on Theological Reflections** hosted by the Institute of Ecumenical Studies at the Ukrainian Catholic University, and the Institut Chrétien d'Orient de Paris, **Sept. 14, 18:30-20:00 Paris time** on how the war in Ukraine might affect ecumenical relations. The event will be in French with English translation. <https://bit.ly/WebinarUkraineEcu>
- 14) **New book:** “The Politics of Extraction: Territorial Rights, Participatory Institutions, and Conflict in Latin America” by Maia Jaskoski. It is a systematic study of how participatory institutions either channel or exacerbate conflict over extraction and includes data of thirty major extractive conflicts in Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru in the 2000s and 2010s <https://bit.ly/PoliticsofExtrac>
- 15) **New book:** “The Avoidable War: The Dangers of a Catastrophic Conflict Between the US and Xi Jinping's China,” by Kevin Rudd. Video of interview with the author: <https://bit.ly/KRuddInterview>

