



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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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

Gerry Lee, director..... glee@maryknoll.org
 Judy Coode..... jcoode@maryknoll.org
 Anna Engelmann..... aengelmann@maryknoll.org
 Dave Kane..... dglobalcitizenkane@gmail.com
 Chloe Schwabe..... cschwabe@maryknoll.org
 Sr. Veronica Schweyen, MM..... vschweyen@maryknoll.org
 Fr. Dave Schwinghamer, MM..... dschwinghamer@gmail.com
 Sr. Elizabeth Zwareva, MM..... ezwareva@mksisters.org

MOGC Washington
 200 New York Ave., NW
 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

Take action - Contact decision makers

President Barack Obama
 The White House
 Washington, D.C. 20500
www.whitehouse.gov

Vice President Joe Biden
 The White House
 Washington, D.C. 20500
vice_president@whitehouse.gov

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Timeline of recent fight against Fast Track

During the months of May and June, trade was the primary issue on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. In order to accelerate movement on the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal, President Obama hoped that Congress would enact “trade promotion authority” (TPA), better known as Fast Track.



The process to pass Fast Track was unpredictable – neither its supporters nor its detractors (such as the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and other organizations in an opposition movement composed of religious, environmental, labor, and human rights groups) could predict how the vote would fall. Ultimately, the House and Senate passed all pieces of legislation.

However, the vote did not come easy and this alone is a victory for civil society and trade justice advocates. While modern trade agreements have faced opposition since NAFTA, the coalition today is more robust and larger than ever before. It included every labor union, environmental and development organizations, faith-based organizations, health advocates, and even some tech companies and senior citizen organizations such as AARP. It was the strength of the movement that virtually shut down the trade votes and may have stopped them altogether. But pro-trade legislators and corporate lobbyists were determined to secure TPA. They used legislative maneuvering that is rarely on exhibit to resurrect the legislation at every turn.

May

Counter to standard procedure for bills with financial implications, pro-trade lawmakers decide to start the legislative process in the Senate instead of the House based on the assumptions that 1) the House doesn't have the votes to pass it, and 2) trade bills usually pass the Senate.

The Republican leadership decides to move the bills as four separate pieces. Besides TPA, the other three bills address Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), customs and trade enforcement, and the Africa Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA).

These three bills are usually what drive Democratic support for trade agreements while Republicans tend to support TPA. It is this relationship between aid and

trade that has been the bi-partisan recipe for past trade agreements and Fast Track bills to pass Congress.

May 12: All but one Democratic senator votes against cloture for TPA, which would have begun debate on TPA with a filibuster-proof majority, because they could not secure a promise from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) to hold votes on all four bills. This is a surprising and unprecedented outcome for the Senate on trade issues. **It is seen as a victory for the trade justice movement to win in the Senate for the first time.**

May 14: Pro-trade senators regroup. Sen. McConnell agrees to demands by Democrats to include TAA and TPA in one package and to vote on the customs and enforcement and AGOA bills first.

Senate passes the customs and enforcement bill (78-20) and AGOA (97-1). Senate approves cloture with the support of 13 Democrats.

Due to concerns that some members of Congress are working on a side deal to strip the “No Fast Track for Human Traffickers” amendment from the TPA bill, 23 faith-based organizations send a letter to the Senate in support of the amendment, providing enough political pressure to protect it.

Notable amendments that fail to make it into the TPA include one to strip the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) and another that would have prevented currency manipulation in trade deals. The currency vote is close and would have had a major impact on the final agreement if it had gone forward since some of the TPP trading partners do practice currency manipulation.

May 19: The Senate votes on TPA. The vote is dramatic and very close. At the last moment, Sen. McConnell promises Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA) that he will hold a vote on reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank, a bill that has been held hostage for months in part due to its decision to stop funding fossil fuel projects. With this agreement, Cantwell and eight other senators put forth their support. The final vote is 62-37 with 12 Democrats supporting and five Republicans opposing the bill.

May 22: Senators Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Orrin Hatch (R-UT) fail to agree on amendments, so strong language against human trafficking stays in the bill.

May 24: Media report on the discovery of graves of human trafficking victims in Malaysia. Malaysia is a Tier

3 country on the U.S. State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons report and a key partner in the TPP negotiations. (Tier 3 indicates countries whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards to combat human trafficking and are not making significant efforts to do so.)

June

Early in the month, attention turns to the House of Representatives. Both sides pick up pressure on legislators to take a position on TPA. The House decides to vote on a customs bill separately from TPA. But they vote on TPA and TAA as a package, meaning both pieces must pass for the bill to move forward. Supporters wanted to keep the TPA bill clean to ease its passage and use the customs bill to include a number of amendments. The House was expected to take up the bill the week after the Senate, but the vote is delayed since the difficulty in the Senate indicates to House leadership that they might not have the votes to pass it.

June 10: The House passes the customs and trade enforcement bill. This bill was the main vehicle for amendments such as ones preventing trade bills from addressing climate change or immigration. Another amendment requires the U.S. to discourage and seek to eliminate boycott-divestment-sanction policies (BDS) by states or organizations against Israeli businesses, even those operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

June 11: With increased attention on the issue due to the May 24 reports on the graves in Malaysia, pressure continues from the faith community to protect the human trafficking amendment that President Obama and the pro-trade Democrats want watered down. Maryknoll Sister Helene O'Sullivan has an op-ed published in *The Hill* (see page 5) and participates in an interfaith press call with American Jewish World Service and NETWORK. Thirteen faith-based organizations sign a letter to the House asking them to oppose TPA.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) comes out against TPA and calls for a paradigm shift on trade policy.

June 12: The House votes on TPA and TAA. TPA passes by only eight votes. Democrats who oppose TPA decide to vote against TAA, the worker assistance program, teaming up with Republicans who oppose the program. TAA loses by a landslide (126-302). Because TAA didn't pass, the full TPA package fails. **This is a huge and unexpected victory for people who oppose the undemocratic TPA.**

June 19: The House pro-trade coalition regroups and decides to vote on TPA and TAA in separate votes and under a new bill. The TPA passes again (218-208) and heads back to the Senate to be voted on as a stand-alone piece of legislation.

June 23: Another letter is sent from the Interfaith Working Group on Trade and Investment, signed by 14 faith-based organizations. The group, and the broader trade justice movement, is concerned that to vote on cloture and the bill this week would ensure that the House customs and trade enforcement bill with anti-immigrant and anti-environmental amendments would become law. The Senate votes to invoke cloture.

June 24: Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) joins opposition to the TPA out of opposition to the deal on Export-Import Bank.

The Senate passes TPA (60-38) followed by TAA (vote not recorded; by voice vote only). Rep. Pelosi and Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) (who championed the fight against Fast Track in the House) asked the Democratic caucus to support the Trade Adjustment Assistance bill this time now that TPA had passed in order to ensure U.S. workers had something to turn to, even though the fund is not enough to cover all workers.

The customs bill heads to conference, a Senate-House committee which negotiates the final text which both bodies can support. The final bill could override content of TPA.

June 29: President Obama signs TAA and TPA into law. The customs bill is still being negotiated in the conference committee.

Ultimately, pro-trade legislators and President Obama can claim victory, but this hard-fought campaign exposes the challenges Congress and the president may face when using Fast Track to pass the controversial TPP which is nearing the end of years-long secret negotiations.

One thing known about the TPP is that it will affect people's everyday lives in a range of ways such as access to affordable medicines in the U.S. and among trading partners. It will allow foreign corporations to sue governments for perceived lost profits in private tribunals (ISDS) that can undermine public health and environmental laws; patent lifespan on hybrid seeds; limit government's ability to control financial flows; and allow for stronger yet unenforceable labor and environmental standards. The Obama administration hopes to sign the TPP into law by the end of the year. §

Trade: “No Fast Track for Human Traffickers”

On June 12, at the height of the Fast Track fight on Capitol Hill, the following opinion piece by Maryknoll Sister Helene O’Sullivan in support of the Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) bill’s “No Fast Track for Human Traffickers” amendment was published in The Hill, an influential news source on Capitol Hill.

On June 29, the TPA package, including the human trafficking amendment, was signed into law. (See related article on page 3.)

However, during the week of July 6, a Senate and House conference committee will meet to determine the final version of a customs and enforcement bill which could overwrite the language in the TPA law signed into law last month. Sr. Helene’s request to lawmakers to put the dignity of human life before corporate profit remains an urgent plea.

[In late May], the horrors of human trafficking in Malaysia became known to the world with the uncovering of unmarked graves near an abandoned migrant camp. This discovery confirms Malaysia’s designation by the State Department as a “Tier 3 country,” indicating that it has serious human trafficking problems and is not making significant efforts to fight the scourge of modern-day slavery.

This grim reminder of the possible fate of migrant workers is a strong argument for the inclusion of the “No Fast Track for Human Traffickers” amendment in the Trade Promotion Authority bill passed by the U.S. Senate.

The amendment, promoted by Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ), bars Tier 3 designated countries, such as Malaysia, from inclusion of U.S. trade deals subject to fast track consideration. And there is good reason for this.

In his letter “21st Century Slavery—the Human Rights Dimension to Trafficking in Human Beings,” Pope John Paul II said human trafficking “constitutes a shocking offense against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights ... in particular the sexual exploitation of women and children.”

Our trade agreements should not support governments that turn a blind eye to trafficking and are not taking clear steps to prevent it. All people have inherent human dignity and worth. Countries that tolerate or condone trafficking of people condone the violation of this sacred gift.



As a Maryknoll Sister, I have worked with survivors of trafficking in Hong Kong and Cambodia. Our center in Phnom Penh provides room and board, counseling, primary and middle school education and job training for employment in four- and five-star hotels for young women as they start a new life in the city.

One illustration of the reality of this modern day slavery is a young woman from the Cambodian countryside named Sina. She had been poor and came from a dysfunctional family that abused her. She ran to a friend’s house and together they ran away from home. When they ran out of the little money they had, her friend brought her to a house and sold her. She soon realized the house was a brothel where she joined seven other girls who were tied up and made to use their bodies for sex. If she refused, the brothel owner would pull

one of her teeth, starting in the back of her mouth. When I first met her, all of her teeth were gone. Sina was rescued by the anti-trafficking police unit and brought to our center for help. We took her to a dentist and provided her support through this traumatic experience and to help her find a fresh start.

Through my work, I have also traveled throughout Southeast Asia and I collaborate with a network of Catholic sisters in the region. Trafficking is a huge problem in Southeast Asia overall and must be taken into consideration as Congress considers Fast Track authority for trade agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

If the TPP were allowed to bypass fulsome debate in Congress through Fast Track, I worry that it will be difficult to enforce robust labor standards that ensure the dignity of work for all individuals.

Although the TPP is being negotiated with only 11 countries right now (including Malaysia), it is a docking agreement so other countries could possibly join, including Thailand, which is also a Tier 3 designated country. We shouldn’t trade with countries that are willing to shield and condone slavery of human life in any form.

... The Senate voted to stand against modern day slavery in trade agreements. Now it is up to our U.S. Representatives to ensure that future trade agreements place the value of human life before corporate profit. I urge the U.S. House of Representatives to remember Sina and the 21 million other victims of human trafficking worldwide and protect the “No Fast Track for Human Traffickers” amendment. §

Trade: Human rights violations by TPP nations

The following is a press release circulated by Public Citizen.

The U.S. Department of State's revelations about grave human rights abuses in Vietnam and Brunei add new hurdles for the Obama administration's push for the already controversial Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) The revelations came in the department's annual human rights report, released [June 25].

The report details jailing of political dissidents and anti-union repression in Vietnam, as well as Brunei's enactment of a sharia-based penal code that punishes homosexuals and single mothers, who could be stoned to death once the code is fully implemented later this year. Vietnam and Brunei are two of the 12 nations negotiating the TPP.

Democrats and Republicans in Congress have criticized the TPP's inclusion of countries notorious for human rights violations. Recent congressional letters have spotlighted Vietnam and Brunei as inappropriate trade pact partners given the severe human rights issues in those nations spotlighted by past State Department reports.

"Having the State Department report grave human rights conditions in several TPP countries even when they are under the spotlight of ongoing negotiations fuels members of Congress' ire about this already unpopular pact," said Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen's

Global Trade Watch.

In [the June 25] report, the U.S. Department of State spotlights Brunei's enactment in May 2014 of a new penal code that criminalizes homosexual and extramarital relations. When Brunei's code is fully implemented, these and other "crimes" are slated to be punishable by flogging, dismemberment and death by stoning.

With respect to Vietnam, the report spotlights "arbitrary or unlawful killings," "continued [efforts] to suppress political speech through arbitrary arrest, short-term detentions without charge, and politically motivated convictions," and restrictions on press freedom due to government censorship and "pervasive self-censorship due to the threat of dismissal and possible arrest." It also focuses on Vietnam's continuing repression of basic labor rights, including a ban on independent unions, use of forced labor and widespread child labor. The report notes that the Vietnamese government itself has estimated that there are 1.75 million child laborers in Vietnam.

Despite Congress' passage of Fast Track ... the push to gain congressional approval for the TPP becomes more politically fraught as 2016 draws nearer, with presidential contenders from both parties recently adding their voices to the widespread criticism of the pact. The human rights violations unveiled in [the June 25] U.S. Department of State report will only fuel broader opposition to the pact among members of Congress, the public and presidential candidates. §

Sudan: Bashir evades Int'l Criminal Court

This past March was the 10-year anniversary of the United Nations Security Council's referral of the genocide in Darfur to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC pursued the case, investigating the estimated 300,000 deaths and over two million people displaced by Janjaweed militias supported by the Sudanese government. The court indicted Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, among other members of his government, in 2009 and 2010 for crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes. To this day, President Bashir remains in power and has not been brought to justice, and the killing and displacement of Sudanese by their own government is again on the upswing.

To renew awareness of the ongoing conflict in Sudan and overcome what one panelist called "compassion fatigue," the Washington Working Group on the International Criminal Court (WICC) (of which MOGC is

a member organization) hosted a congressional briefing sponsored by Senators Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Chris Coons (D-DE) on June 23 called "The Crisis in Sudan: Prospects for Justice and Peace." Before a crowded room, the panel was moderated by Dan Sullivan, director of policy and government relations at United to End Genocide. Speakers included Omer Ismail, a Darfuri who fled Sudan in 1989 because of his political views and is now senior advisor with the Enough Project; Raymond Brown, president of the International Justice Project and legal representative of Darfur victims at the ICC; and Jana Ramsey, policy advisor at the U.S. State Department.

Ismail focused on the current situation in Sudan – the worst it has been since the height of the genocide in 2003-4 – with the Janjaweed militias renewing a "scorched earth policy" of attacking villages in Dar-

fur, displacing an additional 200,000 people in 2015 alone. The Sudanese states of South Kordofan, Blue Nile, and the disputed town of Abyei have all been the targets of similar bombing and “scorched earth” campaigns since 2011, when South Sudan officially gained independence from Sudan. Seventy-five percent of the former Sudan’s oil reserves are now part of South Sudan, which, combined with opposition from many pro-South Sudan villages in the border regions, has incited Bashir’s government to attack its people in this area as well, displacing one million Sudanese since 2011.

Ismail highlighted the powerlessness of UNAMID – the UN and African Union joint mission in Darfur – to carry out its peacekeeping mandate and protect the civilians of Darfur when the Sudanese government constantly monitors their actions and restricts the importation of humanitarian supplies. He gave a tragic example of an attack last October in Tabit, where Sudanese soldiers raped over 200 women in two days. Human Rights Watch (HRW) investigated and released a report of the incident, with 27 firsthand accounts of rape and “credible information” on 194 others. HRW called on the UN to conduct its own investigation, after which UNAMID reported that they did not find any evidence in support of the HRW allegations. Ismail pointed out that an internal report stated that UNAMID staff complained of interference by the government, who accompanied them on their investigations and intimidated witnesses – who unsurprisingly did not have anything to report. While Bashir openly calls for an end to the UN mission, Ismail recommended a renewed effort to protect civilians and an overhaul of the mandate to give the UN a more “robust enforcement mechanism.” He also called for renewed dialogue between the UN, important international stakeholders, the Sudanese government, and moderate opposition forces to begin immediately. During the question and answer period of the briefing, an upset audience member introduced himself as a Darfuri opposition party member and challenged Ismail’s recommendations: “How can we dialogue with criminals,” he asked, and how can a UN mission carry out peacekeeping when there is “no peace to keep”?

Representing the State Department, Jana Ramsey reiterated several times the U.S.’s strong support for the ICC on a “case by case basis.” While 123 states are parties to the Rome Statute, the governing treaty of the ICC, the U.S. is one of 31 states that has signed but not ratified the treaty. In fact, the U.S. is one of three states (along with Israel and Sudan), which has since notified the UN they do not intend to become member states. When an



President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan

audience member suggested the U.S. should be putting more pressure on the UN and the international community to enforce the ICC’s indictment of Bashir, Ramsey stated the U.S. has been doing “everything it can given its capacity,” noting that the support for the court is quiet but there. The audience and fellow panelists refrained from pushing Ramsey on the point that the U.S. could not be doing more – since it has the option of ratifying the Rome Statute and becoming a member state of the ICC, further empowering the court.

Raymond Brown began his remarks with a horrifying quote from a statement he submitted to the ICC on behalf of a Darfuri victim, which described an attack by a Janjaweed militia on a village which left a pregnant woman and her unborn baby murdered then burned in her home. Brown mainly focused his remarks on Bashir’s June 13 trip to South Africa for an African Union summit which received extensive media attention after a court in Pretoria issued an order to detain Bashir in the country until they could determine if he should be arrested for the ICC allegations. Meanwhile, the South African government allowed and facilitated his flight from the country in direct contradiction to its own court’s ruling. Brown noted that the incident again raised the issue of the powerlessness of the international court without the support of its member states, like South Africa, to enforce its rulings. However, it also raised awareness and brought much-needed attention back to this 10-year-old case, Brown said. He expressed appreciation to the large audience who attended the briefing. It is a challenge to the Rule of Law that requires UN sanctions, according to Brown, and simultaneously an empowerment of it. Ramsey echoed Brown: Bashir is “traveling but he is not winning.”

Moderator Dan Sullivan ended the panel by summarizing the panelists’ lamentations of the “awful impunity” shown to Bashir repeatedly in the six years since he has been indicted, and the enduring conundrum of how to strengthen the court and enforce its rulings so it may be an effective mechanism for combatting and deterring crimes against humanity, such as genocide. The silver lining is that more attention is given now than 10 years ago to this and other cases of mass atrocity, and civil society around the world is more engaged – as evidenced by the pressure people have been putting on their governments to pay attention to this and other large-scale violations of human rights. §

Africa: Responses to economic crisis

Africa's primary export is oil. For two decades, Africa's oil has been in high demand, mainly due to the rapid urbanization and industrialization of China. Since the summer of 2014, however, oil prices have declined by 50 percent and the economies of the eight oil exporting nations of Africa have been hard hit. Nevertheless, according to the IMF's April 2015 report "Regional Economic Outlook: Sub-Saharan Africa Navigating Headwinds," Africa's economies are predicted to grow at about 4.5 percent during 2015.

Yet African economies face enormous uncertainties and risks. The large fiscal deficits that are a normal part of the budgets of sub-Saharan governments will become more difficult to finance. Borrowing money will become more expensive as the U.S. Federal Reserve is expected to raise interest rates making the dollar stronger against currencies like the Tanzanian and Ugandan shillings. To continue to promote national development, African nations will have to increase their debt and control their spending. In a recent budget debate in the Tanzanian Parliament, one member bemoaned the fact that the Tanzanian shilling (TSh) had depreciated in value from 1,700 TSh to one dollar at the beginning of 2015 to 2,100 TSh to one dollar in June 2015, a nearly 21 percent decline.

The spread of terrorist activities in some African countries has also had a negative impact on their economies. In the wake of travel warnings by western nations, 23 hotels have closed on the coast of Kenya and thousands of jobs have disappeared. Security concerns are not only driving away tourists in Kenya but are leading to increased defense expenditures, a trend that is taking place throughout Africa. Illicit financial flows are also exacerbating economic problems. Africa loses more than \$50 billion every year as governments and multinational companies engage in fraudulent schemes to avoid tax payments, thus impeding development projects and denying poor people access to crucial services.

These negative trends of bloated military budgets and illicit financial flows are countered by the amaz-

ing efforts of the African Diaspora. Each year around \$33 billion is remitted to sub-Saharan economies from Africans living abroad. According to *African Business* this was more than all of the aid from the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development countries combined. Two thirds of this money flows through two transfer companies: Western Union and MoneyGram. On average these companies charge a 12 percent fee on transfers, about four percent more than the global average, which amounts to a \$1.8 billion tax. Some African entrepreneurs are trying to break the stranglehold of these two companies with innovative services, such as WorldRemit, which make use of the ubiquitous cell phone technology and the use of mobile money transfers to expedite exchanges around the world.

What are African leaders doing to combat these

negative economic headwinds caused by the decline in demand for commodities? One approach is through the formation of regional trade blocs. On June 10 in Johannesburg, South Africa, representatives from 26 African nations, with a combined GDP of \$1 trillion, signed a new trade treaty called the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) which will be anchored on three pillars: traditional market integration, infrastructure development, and industrialization. This treaty will bring together three already existing economic communities – the Southern African Development Community, the East African Community, and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa – and will cre-



ate a free-trade zone that will eventually cover a region of more than 626 million people. Its goal is to ease the movement of goods across member countries, a challenging task given the poor infrastructure development in most of sub-Saharan Africa.

In the last 20 years the value of trade among members of TFTA grew from \$3.2 to \$36 billion. Africa's intra-African trade is currently only about 11 percent of its total trade compared to 60 percent with Europe. Under TFTA these percentages should begin to change as Africa begins to build the continental common market that has been a dream for decades. §

Africa: Challenges of infrastructure development

The following article was prepared by Alfonso Buzzo, who was an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns in the spring of 2015.

The essential role of infrastructure is being rediscovered worldwide as a key component of a comprehensive development strategy. However, in order to be sustainable and deliver real benefits to the communities and the environment directly affected, infrastructure projects need good governance, meaningful civil society participation, and real accountability.

In Africa, for example, there are growing concerns that mega-projects from the World Bank and other international financial institutions (IFIs) are mainly profit-oriented, prioritizing the interests of extractive industries over the needs of the people. Building pipelines and dams rather than schools, roads, and hospitals seems to be the underlying logic of these enterprises.

Africa is a continent with huge potential for solar, hydro, wind, and geothermal power, all scalable, renewable, energy options. However, IFIs like the World Bank and the African Development Bank are emphasizing massive projects that undermine current social and environmental safeguards; require outrageous, and constantly growing, sums of money for their completion; implement questionable private-public partnerships (PPP); and push the financialization of infrastructure even more. This distorts the nature of infrastructure, turning public services into assets.

One such project is taking place in the Democratic Republic of Congo, one of the world's poorest and most politically volatile countries. The Grand Inga Hydro-power Plant is a massive dam with a US\$80 billion price tag that is part of a power grid envisioned by the international financial community to supposedly spur the continent's development. Concerns are growing, however, that foreign companies will gain vast economic benefits from this mega-project, taking attention away from the development needs of Africa's poor majority, especially food security, right to water, health, and education. Very little of the electricity generated by Grand Inga will provide for city- or village-level power to Congolese people. Moreover, huge environmental impacts are expected. Diverting the flow of the Congo River (shown in map) to create a reservoir would flood the Bundi Valley, affecting local agricultural lands and communities and natural environments, and potentially causing huge methane emissions that would contribute to global warming.



In East Africa, these mega infrastructure projects have multiplied as well. The Lamu Port-South Sudan Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) is a complex initiative that combines many elements: the development of a new port at Lamu, Kenya; an oil pipeline from Lamu to South Sudan; and road and railway links to the western part of Ethiopia. However, there has not been a proper community consultation process. Families displaced by the construction of the Lamu Port have yet to be compensated, and the Kenyan government has not taken into account the situation of marginalized communities, such as the Boni in Lamu.

According to Ekuru Aukot, Member of Parliament for Balambala in Garissa County, eastern-central Kenya, the issue of land and its management is central to the LAPSSET project. In his words, "There is no such thing as free land in pastoral nomadic communities. Land is owned communally [and] this ought to be the route to negotiation over LAPSSET." Consequently, there is a communitarian consensus that these issues should be addressed "before a camel and a bulldozer are facing each other."

Infrastructure is an important component of an overall sustainable development strategy. However, it is critical to discuss what kind of infrastructure is necessary, where it is best suited, and who is to benefit from it. Massive, capital-intensive infrastructure projects tend to ignore important realities such as poverty and income inequalities, as well as the need to promote sustainable development in light of Africa's vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.

As the Heinrich Böll Foundation has concluded, "Large, long-term energy infrastructure investments in resource-dependent African countries with high levels of economic uncertainty and without a significant revenue collection base to cover expenses pose a real challenge." Using public resources to leverage private investment could create an enormous additional debt burden in these countries. The history of PPPs – particularly in Africa – has demonstrated that when private capital is injected into these projects, private investors seldom invest in reaching poor people with affordable services. The challenge of universal access is left to ill-funded governments to solve. §

Myanmar: Rohingya face discrimination, exploitation

The following article was written by Maryknoll Affiliate Chris Smith, a freelance writer from Washington, D.C.

The recent surge of 4,000 Rohingya migrants that fled Myanmar and Bangladesh in April and May illustrates a story rooted in discrimination and ostracism based on anti-Muslim bias that permeates the Buddhist-majority nation of Myanmar. These desperate boat people sought refuge in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and other parts of Myanmar, victims of human trafficking and a regional paralysis by governments unwilling to extend a helping hand. Amnesty International has called the Rohingya “the most persecuted refugees in the world.”

In Myanmar, the Rohingya are concentrated in the Rakhine State in the western part of the country, making up one-third of the population. The Myanmar government claims that the Rohingya are illegal Bengali immigrants. Ethnic discrimination has resulted in a lack of access to education, health care and employment. More than 140,000 Rohingya people crowd into woefully inadequate camps where “they are closely monitored by the authorities, conscripted into forced labor and barred from travel outside their villages without permission.” [*The New York Times*, “Myanmar to bar Rohingya from fleeing, but won’t address their plight,” June 12, 2015]

The Rohingya people’s roots in Burma/Myanmar are well established. Thousands of Muslims in the 1400s migrated to form the Arakan Kingdom, and an additional influx occurred in the 19th and 20th centuries, when the Bengal and Rakhine territories were governed by the British Empire. Since Burma was granted independence in 1948, the government has rejected Rohingya claims for citizenship despite their history in the Rakhine State. Ethnic Buddhists’ domination of the state has solidified this discriminatory treatment, and a 1982 law passed by the military junta formally stripped the Rohingya of access to full citizenship. Only in the 1990s was limited, temporary “white card” status granted, institutionalizing their status as second class citizens.

Anti-Rohingya passions exploded in 2012 when a Buddhist woman was raped and murdered, and Rohingya men were accused of the crimes. Rohingya villages were burned and over 280 people were killed, resulting in over 120,000 people fleeing the country. Human Rights Watch described this as “crimes against humanity as part of a campaign of ethnic cleansing.” A UN-backed census in 2014 was marked by Buddhist protests against the use of “Rohingya” registrations and they demanded

that the term “Bengali” be used in its place. Buddhists also successfully protested the Rohingya’s right to vote in the scheduled 2015 constitutional referendum, even after the Rohingya voted in both the 2008 constitutional referendum and the 2010 general election.

Additional political reforms in Myanmar were stymied on June 25 when the national parliament voted to retain the military junta’s guaranteed 25 percent stake in parliamentary seats, while maintaining the 75 percent threshold required to pass any changes in the Myanmar constitution.

The refugee emergency in Myanmar also intersects with the issue of human trafficking. The vulnerability of the Rohingya people has provided an opening for human traffickers to exploit, and many Rohingya seeking to leave Myanmar have been caught in Thailand, a major transit point for human trafficking. The U.S. State Department’s 2014 report on Trafficking in Persons downgraded Thailand’s rating to the worst level (Tier 3). The discovery of mass graves in migrant detention camps in Malaysia near the Thai border prompted the Thai government to crack down on smugglers and traffickers, but the danger to refugees seeking avenues to flee Myanmar remains. (See related article on page 5.)

Efforts to address the Rohingya refugee crisis in a comprehensive manner have been largely ineffective. The summer monsoon season may serve to restrict the migration flow, but the exodus could easily resume in the fall. Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the opposition National League of Democracy (NLD), has not spoken out against the anti-Muslim rhetoric that is popular among ethnic Buddhists, and the NLD will need Buddhist support in the November elections.

The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) has not provided a unified response to the Myanmar crisis, and Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand have failed to ratify the UN Refugee Convention and its Protocol, which establishes fundamental rights for refugees. The European Union could accept refugees, adjusting individual country quotas based on people accepted so far, unemployment rate and similar economic indicators.

Outside pressure on the Myanmar government has been limited. The United States and other western countries have normalized trade ties with Myanmar, even though analysts believe that Myanmar needs these relationships more than western countries need ties to Myanmar.

Any meaningful resolution of the Rohingya crisis

must start with the strategy of the Myanmar government, which has resisted moving away from its harsh, discriminatory policy. The November 2015 elections may serve as a guide post for whether a path of reconciliation is chosen for the future. Neighboring countries, along with the larger community of nations, can certainly do more to mitigate the immediate refugee crisis. Effective measures to deter and stop human trafficking would also alleviate

the suffering and exploitation of the Rohingya population. Ending the long history of discrimination and exclusion that has plagued the Rohingya people will require a significant change in policy by the Myanmar government. The current refugee crisis is simply the latest manifestation of how ethnic conflict can exacerbate national and regional destabilization and solidify roadblocks to building more tolerant and just societies around the world. §

Japan's bishops: "Peace must not depend upon weapons"

In commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, the Catholic bishops of Japan released the following statement.

1. The Church cannot remain silent in the face of threats to human life and dignity

For the Catholic Church, this is a noteworthy year because it marks the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). In the first half of the 20th century the Christian Church centered in Europe experienced two world wars and genocide against the Jews by Nazi Germany.

Reflecting on these tragedies, the Church cannot close itself up with merely "religious" concerns. We have realized that the problems of humanity are our problems. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, issued at the end of the Second Vatican Council, is a clear example of this insight, opening with the following words.

"The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts."

From the end of the Second Vatican Council up to the papacy of Pope Francis today, the Church has actively faced the issues of human life and dignity, especially of those who are excluded or oppressed.

2. The decision to renounce war

Japanese colonial rule on the Korean Peninsula until 1945 as well as acts of aggression against China and other Asian countries caused great suffering and sacrifice among people. The Second World War was a horrible experience for the Japanese people as well. Beginning with the Tokyo air raid of March 10, 1945, large-scale air raids struck many cities in Japan. In addition to the many Japanese and foreign troops who be-

came casualties during land combat on Okinawa, many civilians suffered as well. Then finally there were the atomic bombings of Hiroshima on August 6 and Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. These experiences gave birth to a desire for peace that was codified in the Constitution of Japan promulgated in 1946 based on the sovereignty of the people, the renunciation of war and respect for basic human rights. Following this peace constitution, Japan has striven to build relationships of trust and friendship with the nations of Asia.

Against the background of the Cold War and the subsequent fall of the Berlin Wall, the Catholic Church throughout the world has made increasingly clear its opposition to the arms race and the use of weapons to resolve disputes.

In his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII said, "in this age which boasts of its atomic power, it no longer makes sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to repair the violation of justice" Vatican II in *Gaudium et Spes* opposed the arms race, and urged peace that does not rely upon military force. In his Appeal for Peace in Hiroshima in 1981, Pope John Paul II demonstrated this clear renunciation of war when he said, "War is the work of man. War is destruction of human life. War is death."

Given this historical background, it is a matter of course that we Japanese bishops respect the ideals of Japan's no-war Constitution. For Christians, the renunciation of war is demanded by the Gospel of Christ. It is a respect for life that cannot be abandoned by religious people and an ideal that is held firmly by the whole human race.

3. The Japanese Church's peace vocation

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan knows that it has a special vocation to work for peace. It is not based upon any political ideology. We continue to appeal for peace not as a political issue, but as a human one. Our awareness of this vocation is, of course, in-

fluenced by the horrors inflicted by nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but it is also born of deep remorse when we reflect upon the attitude of the Church in Japan before and during the war.

During a Mass celebrated on September 26, 1986, at the plenary meeting of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) held in Tokyo, Archbishop Shirayanagi of Tokyo made the following declaration. "We Catholic bishops of Japan, as Japanese, and as members of the Catholic Church in Japan, sincerely ask forgiveness from God and from our brothers and sisters of Asia and the Pacific Region for the tragedy brought by the Japanese during the Second World War. As parties involved in the war, we share in the responsibility for the more than 20 million victims in Asia and the Pacific. Furthermore, we deeply regret having damaged the lives and cultures of the people of these regions. The trauma of this is still not healed."

These words were not those of a single bishop. He spoke as president of the bishops' conference, conveying the opinion of the whole conference. As mentioned above, in their messages on the 50th and 60th anniversaries of the end of the war, the bishops continued to reflect upon the issue of the Church's responsibility before and during the war and from that standpoint have expressed their determination in favor of peace.

4. Problems such as recognition of history and the exercise of collective self-defense

Seventy years after the war, memory of it is fading along with memories of Japanese colonial rule and aggression with its accompanying crimes against humanity. Now, there are calls to rewrite the history of that time, denying what really happened. The present government is attempting to enact laws to protect state secrets, allow for the right of collective self-defense and change Article 9 of the Constitution to allow the use of military force overseas.

At the same time, we cannot overlook growing nationalism not only in Japan, but among the governments of other countries in this part of the world. As tensions rise between nations, a strong commitment to improved relations through dialogue and negotiation rather than increased militarization becomes more important for regional stability.

Domestically, the situation in Okinawa presents a particularly serious problem. Compared to the rest of the country, the number of military bases there is especially high. New base construction is underway, contrary to the wishes of the citizens of the prefecture. This demonstrates an attitude that puts priority on armaments while

ignoring people and efforts to build peace.

5. Amidst the serious crises facing the world today

Viewing the world today, the tragedies of military conflict and terrorism occur over and over again in many places. In addition to conflicts between nations and ethnic groups, now violence in the name of religion makes it increasingly seem as if throughout the world dialogue has become impossible. In that situation, women and children as well as ethnic and religious minorities are especially threatened and many lose their lives.

In the face of such worldwide destructiveness, Pope Francis has expressed concern that some people seem to speak of a "Third World War" rather than making sure we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. The world faces the sorts of crises that cannot but cause people to wonder if force is the answer. What has become of respect for humanity? However, repeatedly answering violence with violence will only lead to the destruction of humanity. The world is dominated by the globalization of companies and the financial system.

Disparities continue to widen and the poor are excluded. Human economic activity is causing climate change and the destruction of biodiversity. If we wish to realize peace, this situation must change. We cannot ignore the problems of poverty and the environment that produce disparity and exclusion. We are each called upon to overcome our indifference to the world's problems and change our lives. We cannot solve all the world's problems at once, but we can patiently continue to work toward peace and mutual understanding.

In conclusion

We recall the words of Pope John Paul II in his Appeal for Peace in Hiroshima: "Peace must always be the aim: peace pursued and protected in all circumstances. Let us not repeat the past, a past of violence and destruction. Let us embark upon the steep and difficult path of peace, the only path that befits human dignity, the only path that leads to the true fulfillment of the human destiny, the only path to a future in which equity, justice and solidarity are realities and not just distant dreams." We are encouraged by the words of Jesus Christ, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Mt. 5:9). Seventy years after the end of the war and 50 years after the end of the Second Vatican Council, let us renew our determination to seek peace and to work for peace. We Catholics in Japan are small in number, but in union with other Christians and along with believers of other religions and those throughout the world who wish for peace, we renew our commitment to work to make peace a reality. §

Central America: Corruption fuels protests

The following article was written by Marek Cabre-
ra, who recently ended a 10-month internship with the
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

The avalanche of news coming out of both Hon-
duras and Guatemala since April about widespread cor-
ruption within the highest political and economic circles
reveals the overwhelming degree to which organized
crime controls important parts of both governments. In
both countries, corrupt and criminal elites have colluded
to enrich themselves by stealing hundreds of millions
of dollars in the last few years alone from government
agencies that provide social services, and revenue for
the government.

One example is that of Mario Zelaya, head of the
Honduran Institute Social Security (IHSS), the national
health insurance provider, defrauded hundreds of mil-
lions of dollars in government contracts meant for the
IHSS through shell companies. Without the IHSS's abil-
ity to provide medical treatment or medicines, close to
3,000 may have died from 2012-2014. (Spanish-lan-
guage article: "MP debe investigar muertes en el IHSS,"
El Heraldo, May 27, 2015; "How hitmen and high living
lifted lid on looting of Honduran healthcare system," *The
Guardian*, June 10, 2015.)

In May, Guatemala's
Vice President Roxana Bal-
detti (right) resigned after
several scandals, including
one about having approved
a contract for \$20 million
to a company close to her to
clean up a contaminated lake
using what news investiga-
tions later said was simply
salt and water. Most of the
contract was later cancelled.
And these are just two ex-
amples of the many – at times
bizarre, but nevertheless
criminal – schemes of corrup-
tion that do not seem to
stop coming from both coun-
tries.



The reaction from the population has been swift,
and it is already generating the type of pressure from
the ground up that could force significant reform at the
top. Hundreds of thousands of people in both countries
have taken to the streets almost daily. During the last
two months support among the population for demands
of transparency, democratic reform and punishment for
the perpetrators for the fraud and crimes has only in-
creased. "Renuncia ya!" (Resign now!) is the rallying

cry against Guatemalan President Otto Pérez Molina. As
Anita Isaacs noted in *The New York Times*, "The public
response has been deafening: Hundreds of thousands of
Guatemalans have taken to social media and the streets.
What began as a largely middle-class and urban protest
has evolved to include peasants and indigenous Guate-
malans, the first time the country has united to demand
democratic reform." ("America's second chance in Gua-
temala," June 22, 2015)

In Honduras, marches have spread from the main
urban areas to throughout the country. People are de-
manding the formation of an international investigative
body similar to the UN-sponsored CICIG (Comisión
Internacional contra la Impunidad en Guatemala). Dana
Frank, a historian at the University of California-Santa
Cruz told *The New York Times* that "the protests were a
response to the degeneration of the rule of law since the
coup, which has led to broad impunity for corruption
in the government and the police." ("Wave of protests
spreads to scandal-weary Honduras and Guatemala,"
June 12, 2015)

As expected, both governments have responded
to the protests with a campaign that increasingly seeks
to delegitimize the demands and the demonstrations. In
Honduras a senior economic advisor to the president
gave a chilling warning when he said that the gov-
ernment should not allow the protesters to hurt the
Honduran economy with their demonstrations. The
demonization campaign and the warnings from top
official clearly represent a moment of serious risk for
a potential movement that seeks democratic and par-
ticipatory reforms in their institutions.

The Obama administration plans to give those
governments increased political and diplomatic sup-
port, security cooperation, and the promise of econom-
ic aid through the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity
in the Northern Triangle (PAPNT). (See related article
in March-April 2015 *NewsNotes*.) U.S. Vice President
Joe Biden recently met at the White House with Juan
Orlando Hernández, president of Honduras, a move
widely criticized by the Honduran opposition because
it emboldens and gives political cover to the Orlando
administration.

NGOs in the U.S. are calling on the U.S. govern-
ment to play a constructive role in the region and to not
give a green light to violence and repression. The 2009
military coup d'état in Honduras and its violent after-
math are powerful reminders of what the U.S. should
not support. §

Bolivia: Eco-unfriendly projects move ahead

In 2011 indigenous communities marched hundreds of miles to Bolivia's capital, La Paz, to protest a government proposal to construct a highway through the Isiboro-Secure Indigenous Territory and National Park (TIPNIS in its Spanish acronym) (See related article in November-December 2011 NewsNotes). They were successful in postponing the project until the government held consultations with the 69 indigenous communities affected by the highway. The validity of the official results of these consultations, which indicated support for the project, has been questioned.. The decision to go ahead with the TIPNIS highway and other projects represents a contradiction within the government of Evo Morales that advocates for a greener economy on the international stage while continuing to depend on environmentally destructive ventures nationally.

According to the government, 55 of the 69 communities consulted about the highway (80 percent) agreed to its construction, yet Bolivia's human rights ombudsman, Rolando Villena, issued a report calling the consultations "authoritarian, colonialist and unilateral." Three communities opposed the project and 11 boycotted the consultation process altogether.

A 15-member commission representing the Catholic Church and the Permanent Assembly of Human Rights in Bolivia (APDHB) carried out a parallel consultation of 36 communities, reporting that 30 were against the highway. They found the official consultations to be neither free, nor prior, nor informed – the three requirements to be considered legitimate according to the International Labor Organization's Convention 169, which Bolivia has officially adopted. While President Morales has said that the controversy over the highway ended with these consultations, it is clear that the struggle is far from over. To continue following the issue, Emily Achtenberg in the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) has a series of articles detailing the long, controversial process around the highway and will continue to cover the matter.

The controversial highway is not the only initiative that concerns indigenous communities and environmentalists. Two weeks before announcing his plan to go ahead with the highway, Morales issued Supreme Decree 2366, which opens up national parks, considered natural reserves in the Bolivian Constitution, for oil and gas exploration. This announcement confirms the fears of many that the highway is not planned only to help stimulate economic development in the area, but also to

facilitate the extraction of fossil fuels from the area. Indeed, since first elected in 2005, Morales has expanded the amount of land conceded to oil and gas exploration from 7.2 million acres to 59.3 million. Until this decree, exploration in national parks had been impossible. A rapid increase in drilling and mining in these reserves is expected.

The decree requires one percent of money invested in extraction projects to be used for local development projects and that projects in "fragile ecosystems" to use advanced technologies to minimize environmental impact and carry out independent environmental impact assessments (EIAs). But according to environmentalist Teresa Flores, these requirements are misleading because the government has made the EIAs into mere formalities and the agency responsible for evaluating the assessments has "no independence and does what the government wants." According to government data, 11 of 22 protected areas are already overlapped by oil and gas concessions. In addition, according to Jorge Campanini from Bolivia's Documentation and Information Centre (CEDIB), the new law allows companies to change the way protected lands are zoned. "The discovery of a potential commercially-viable deposit within a Protected Area means that the company can demand that SERNAP [National Service for Protected Areas] reconfigures the park... The Protected Area and its [land-use] zonification would be re-drawn according to oil exploitation criteria rather than the criteria of conservation and protection."

Another significant threat to Bolivian forests comes from an ambitious goal announced last year by Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera: by 2025 Bolivia aims to expand the amount of land dedicated to agriculture by 2.5 times (from 5.2 million hectares to 13 million) in order to triple food production to 45 million tons. Besides securing Bolivian food security, the vice president said the proposal would create one million jobs and bring in needed foreign currency through the export of up to 24 million tons of food.

A concern with this goal, according to Dr. Robert Müller, a biologist from the Institute of Geography at the German Georg-August-Universität who has been working in Bolivia since 2000, is that "[n]o land without forest is available anymore... Clearing one million hectares per year would increase the deforestation rate - which is among the highest in the world already - by a factor of four or five."

The plan will also result in substantial increases

in Bolivia's greenhouse gas emissions, the same emissions that President Morales urges the global community to reduce rapidly in order to avoid the worst of climate change. According to a study by Friends of Nature, 77 percent of Bolivia's carbon emissions already come from the conversion of forests into agricultural land.

Vice President Garcia Linera explained the contradiction between Bolivia's strong ecological stance in international forums and their destructive national policies in an essay titled "Geopolitics of the Amazon" saying that the



A member of the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu (Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu; CONAMAQ), a confederation of highland indigenous communities, speaks at a demonstration in opposition to TIPNIS, September 2011. Photo by Pablo Andrés Rivero; used courtesy of Creative Commons licensing.

priority of the government is "overcoming capitalism as a mode of production, [whether] in its extractivist or non-extractivist variant." Additionally, referring to the principle of differential responsibilities he says that high-carbon countries in the global North will more effectively address climate change. §

A member of the National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu (Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qullasuyu; CONAMAQ), a confederation of highland indigenous communities, speaks at a demonstration in opposition to TIPNIS, September 2011. Photo by Pablo Andrés Rivero; used courtesy of Creative Commons licensing.

Laudato Si': A cause for celebration

The following statement was released by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) on June 18; a longer reflection from MOGC on Pope Francis' encyclical will be published soon. See a listings of resources related to Laudato Si' on page 19; a commentary by Fr. John Brinkman, MM is also available on our website.

The Maryknoll mission family celebrates the publication of "*Laudato Si'*" ("Praised be: On the care of the common home"), Pope Francis' letter to the people of God that calls for a greater understanding of the integration of human ecology and our planet, identifies human activity as a primary source of climate change, and urges a conversion to a lifestyle of greater simplicity.

Over the years, through their service to and lived experiences with indigenous peoples and marginalized communities, Maryknollers have come to recognize the critical need to protect Earth and its many gifts. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, which advocates and educates on issues that affect Maryknollers and the people they serve, has highlighted climate change as a real and urgent threat to Earth's people, especially the most vulnerable who have done the least actual damage. We are grateful to have this social teaching of the Church clarified by the Holy Father in this official encyclical – every pope in the past 50 years has raised the moral dilemma of humankind's destruction of the earth; Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI both decried envi-

ronmental degradation.

"We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalization of indifference."
– Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*

As voluntary migrants who choose to leave home and travel far to serve God's people, Maryknollers have often had to learn new and sometimes uncommon languages. In that light we applaud the allusion behind the encyclical's title: *Laudato Si'* is taken from St. Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Creatures, a 13th century prayer that celebrates all the aspects of God's creation. Unlike most Christian prayers at the time which were written in Latin, St. Francis' hymn of praise was composed in an Umbrian dialect, a language of the common people, and clearly meant to communicate most directly to them.

More than remarks to the press or a simple statement, a papal encyclical is part of the official doctrine of the Church, and as such calls on all Catholics to examine their lives in light of this social teaching of the Church. We hope all people of good will who care for the future of our planet will be inspired by this call for "ecological conversion." In the coming weeks we will offer our reflections on this letter and the observations and insights of Maryknoll missionaries on the impact of climate change upon the marginalized and vulnerable communities whom we serve around the world. §

Pax Christi International's Bethlehem Commitment

Pax Christi International – the Brussels-based secretariat, national sections, and member organizations (which includes Maryknoll) – gathered in Bethlehem in the Occupied Palestinian Territories from May 13-17 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of its founding. The declaration below was affirmed by the attendees of the conference. More information is at www.paxchristi.net.

Where we began and where we are now...

Forged in the broken relationships of a brutal war, Pax Christi began its journey 70 years ago with a vision based on the gospel – love your enemies – and rooted in a deep belief that reconciliation was possible. Shaped over the years by people of faith struggling to make peace in the midst of injustice and war, violence and repression, our movement brings to this moment in history a renewed commitment to make real in our lives and in our work for peace the values we claim to hold.

From the beginning we have accompanied those who are on the margins and we continue to connect with grassroots communities, listening with care to their stories and learning from their experience about possible, practical routes to enduring peace and, at the same time, developing insights into other pathways to peace.

At a time when poverty, exclusion, hopelessness and a lack of future possibilities pervade the lives of many young people making extremist ideologies attractive, we recognise the legacy of colonialism and systemic injustice, the power of active nonviolence, the importance of diversity and the urgency of inclusion.

At a time when fear is both real and orchestrated, we build bridges to hope, celebrating an abundance of difference among us; of age and culture, ethnicity and religion, sex and gender, experience and worldview.

With deep roots in the Catholic tradition and encouraged by the vision and witness of Pope Francis, we claim the richness of Catholic social teaching as we Christians strengthen existing ecumenical and interfaith cooperation.

In this journey we have learned that just relationships are essential for sustainable peace – that we humans are part of an earth community that must be healthy if we are to survive. We have come to see the interconnections between war and preparations for war, environmental damage, climate change and scarcity of essential resources. We are deepening our understanding of sustainability.

We also have learned that just relationships are essential to just peace – that Catholic hierarchy and local

communities, ordained and lay, women and men bring equal gifts to the work for peace.

While war, preparations for war, the proliferation of arms and violent conflict seem to be omnipresent, we promote nonviolence, nurture community and work for a world where human rights and international law are consistently respected.

Bringing the future into focus...

From its early days in post-World War II Europe, Pax Christi has become a global movement, a network of member organisations on five continents, each responding to the signs of the times in their own context, contributing in a rich diversity of ways to the peace and reconciliation we all seek.

In the coming five years, as we move toward our 75th anniversary in 2020, we will continue to value and learn from the work of each member organisation. In an increasingly interconnected world, where challenges to peace are so often global as well as local, we also will seek ways to deepen our connections and build on the peacemaking and peacebuilding experience in our network to address together some of the most pressing threats and to nourish together some of the greatest possibilities for peace.

The peace we seek is sustainable peace. It is the overall goal of our work for peace, grounded in respect for the integrity of creation and shaped by a deep exploration of inclusive security that is rooted in justice. Our commitment to sustainable peace is enriched by faith; our understanding is deepened by theological reflection; and our steadfast resolve is strengthened by the spirituality that accompanies our journey. In the coming five years, the articulation of Pax Christi's spirituality, peace education and peace politics will become even more important to our movement.

The pathway we seek is defined by the practice of active nonviolence as a powerful alternative to extremist violence and militarisation. While not all our members are pacifist, Pax Christi's constant dialogue about and exploration of the Gospel message of nonviolence keeps this issue alive in our movement. In the coming five years we will further develop efforts with the Vatican and religious communities to deepen Catholic thought on active nonviolence and to augment our Pax Christi conversation.

The future we seek is already visible among the youth in our communities. It is a future filled with hope and possibility, but threatened at the same time by ex-

tremism and the distortion of religion. Many Pax Christi member organisations already have youth programmes; we will value that experience and learn from it. In the coming five years we will engage more young people, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures and faiths, as valuable and equal members of our movement. We will present alternatives to extremism, share our rich spirituality with young people in a secularised world; encourage concrete campaigns and immersion experiences; promote intergenerational conversation and cooperation; and encourage leadership development for youth in Pax Christi.

The global community we seek will fully engage women in resolving violent conflict and making peace. Pax Christi-connected women from diverse cultures and faiths have deep experience making and building peace. In the coming five years we will strengthen our network for connecting women's peacemaking and peacebuilding experience in our movement; we will listen to and learn from that experience; we will support the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security and other efforts to create a gender-inclusive route to peace.

The societies we seek will bring people of faith and people of good will together to reduce the tensions that exist among and within different religious traditions. In the coming five years we will prioritize our cooperation with Muslim and Jewish peacemakers and with people of other traditions, spiritualities and convictions.

The many faces of violence, the systemic roots of racism and exclusion, and the pathway to reconciliation, the founding focus of Pax Christi, will continue to chal-

lenge our movement in the coming five years. As Pax Christi national sections and as affiliated member organisations – when possible together as an international network – we will maintain our multifaceted work for peace, sustain our work for arms control and disarmament, develop our focus on transitional and ecological justice and underscore the impact of faith and religion on the way to peace.

Continuing the journey as a faith-based movement for peace, we will strengthen Pax Christi as a co-responsible global network of national sections and affiliated member organisations, each working for peace in their own context while building a more visible common identity and a stable financial base. We will regionalise our work for peace, recognise the contribution of thousands of volunteers and facilitate an exchange of experience and expertise among all Pax Christi member organisations, including religious congregations that are members of Pax Christi International. We will review and strengthen our capacity for international advocacy to reflect the deep grassroots experience of our members. And we will develop our capacity for communication, making Pax Christi more visible and projecting a clear, hopeful and prophetic message about nonviolent alternatives to violent extremism.

As we turn to the future, we claim again the vision that peace is possible and vicious cycles of violence and injustice can be broken. We seek a world where people can live in peace, without fear and we follow Jesus the Peacemaker, relying on the presence of the Spirit to “guide our feet into the way of peace.” (Zechariah) §



Participants from around the world gathered in Bethlehem for Pax Christi International's World Assembly, May 13-17, 2015. Gerry Lee and Judy Coode attended from the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

Torture survivors hold D.C. conference

The following article was written by Kristen Mi-ano, a graduate student at American University who is interning with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns this summer.

June is Torture Awareness Month, and the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC) sought to bring plenty of awareness to the issue with their Survivors' Week Conference.

The conference kicked off with a series of lectures, stories, and panel discussions on June 24 at Catholic University. The auditorium was packed not only with supporters of the TASSC, but also numerous survivors of torture from all around the world, including countries such as Ethiopia, Cameroon, Russia, and Nigeria.

United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture Juan Mendez opened the conference with a keynote address about his work with the UN, including his struggles to obtain access to certain countries where human rights abuses are prevalent, the roadblocks he has encountered while trying to assess the conditions in the Guantanamo Bay detention facilities, and his own disappointment with the immigration detention facilities in the U.S.

"Why do we use detention as a means of deterring people who want asylum and protection?" Mendez asked during his speech. "We need to support those who can bear witness and tell them there is life after torture."

After Mendez's speech, the conference continued with two panel discussions. The first covered issues of political space and conflict in African and Middle Eastern nations and their relationships to the human rights abuses being committed in those countries. In addition to a frank discussion of the issues, the panel also stressed how important it is for advocates against torture to speak out, whether it is to Congress or in day to day life.

The next panel featured a discussion about the practice of immigration detention within the United States. The panel led off with a story from Charles Forchenmbin, a torture survivor from Cameroon who came to the United States seeking asylum, but was instead placed in an immigration detention facility for seven months in Arizona. Forchenmbin spoke not only of the terrible conditions in the facility, but also of the

trauma he experienced from being detained as a survivor of torture. For many torture survivors seeking asylum in the U.S., being detained can retraumatize them, bringing back memories of their experiences with torture.

Following Forchenmbin's story were discussions of the experience of Lindsey Wilkes, a lawyer working with survivors in these detention facilities, and her own struggles with getting access and being allowed to provide adequate assistance to her clients. According to Wilkes, more than 80 percent of migrants do not get a day in court and often the bail set for detainees – upwards of \$10,000 for a detained immigrant – is higher than that set for people facing actual criminal charges in the United States.

Closing out the panel was Rebecca Nathanson from the office of Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA), speak-

ing about the congressman's upcoming piece of legislation, the Accountability in Immigration Detention Act of 2015. Though the bill has not gained much traction yet, Nathanson expressed her hope that the advocates present at the conference would be able to reach out to their own representatives to draw attention to the issue.

On June 25, the advocates, supporters and survivors did just that, as 13 separate delegations took to Capitol Hill to not only lobby their representatives and senators, but also to appear before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission. Three survivors from TASSC shared their stories with the commission and implored the members of Congress present to assist them in drawing attention to the practices of torture and human rights abuses in their home countries.

Friday was a day set aside for peace and healing as the survivors gathered to not only share their stories, but also to share their cultures with one another. To foster this community of healing, the survivors participated in a group craft project in which they all created cranes out of colored paper to be displayed in the TASSC office at the end of the week.

The final event of Survivors' Week, a planned vigil at the White House, was unfortunately rained out, but the event was moved to the TASSC offices where the entire conference community gathered for a day of sharing, music, celebration, and a renewed commitment to the fight for a torture free world. §



Charles Forchenmbin and Feyera Sobokssa testified at the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on June 25. Photo courtesy of TASSC.

Resources

Following are a few of the many websites that provide resources and reflections on the recently released encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. If you are interested in a document in hard copy, please use the phone number provided at the end of the resource citation.

1) **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Environment/Environmental Justice Program:**

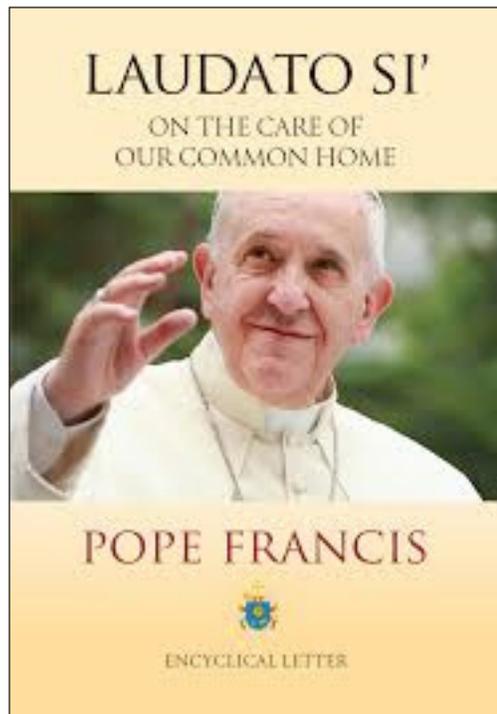
In addition to hosting the text of the encyclical, the USCCB's Environment/Environmental Justice Program webpage offers a number of resources including a discussion guide (also available in Spanish), bulletin inserts, a "Prayer to Care for our Common Home," access to the Capitol Hill briefing on *Laudato Si'*, relevant quotes from Church teachings on the environment and ecology, liturgical guides, actions guides, and links to other resources that discuss the encyclical. <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/index.cfm>. Phone: 202-541-3000

2) **Catholic Climate Covenant:** The Catholic Climate Covenant aims to connect Catholic teaching with advocacy efforts, such as media strategies, climate change-awareness events, congressional advocacy efforts, and participation in conferences, networking and partnerships. The site offers highlights of important quotes from *Laudato Si'*; some brief analysis; a deeper look into what Catholic teaching has to say about care for the climate and the environment; and the option to sign up to receive more resources related to action and advocacy. <http://www.catholic-climatecovenant.org/>. Phone: 202-756-5545

3) **A reader's guide to *Laudato Si'*:** National Catholic Reporter and Fr. Thomas Reese, SJ provide an eight-page guide which includes a brief reflection on each chapter of the encyclical, plus a few questions

for consideration. <http://ncrnews.org/documents/NCR%20Readers%20guide.pdf>. Phone: 800-444-8910

4) ***Laudato Si'*: A Map:** America magazine published this six-chapter essay taking a look at the key points of the encyclical. It's described as a useful guide for initial reading of the encyclical and is meant to help the reader to better understand the basic themes of the pieces and better grasp the overall development on *Laudato Si'*. After providing the reader with a brief overview of the piece as a whole, the remaining chapters break down the main points into brief summary, arguments, and highlighted passages. <http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/laudato-si-map>. Phone: 800-627-9533



5) **A Student's Guide to Global Climate Change:** For those who might need assistance explaining to children or youth groups about climate change, the Environmental Protection Agency provides a simple break down of what climate change

is, what causes it, why it is problematic for the Earth, and what the results will be. The page also provides information about sustainable energy technology and some basic tips for how to live "greener." This site could be a great jumping off point for any beginning discussion of *Laudato Si'* or just a good place to go for an environmentally friendly lesson. <http://www.epa.gov/climatestudents/index.html>. Phone: 202-343-9990

6) **Earth Day Network:** An organization born out of the earliest days of the environmental movement, the Earth Day Network is a great place to start for anyone looking to become an environmental activist. From their annual Earth Day Campaign, to their frequent calls to actions, to their larger efforts like the "A Billion Acts of Green" campaign, the Earth Day Network is one of the better places to go to for updates on environmental news and ways to get involved with the movement. <http://www.earthday.org/>. Phone: 202-518-0044