

JPW BULLETIN

Newsletter of the Justice and Peace Workers (JPW) Network of Asia-Pacific April – June 2009, No.2

"The Justice and Peace Workers Asia-Pacific Forum is a proactive network of solidarity among women and men working with Catholic Justice and Peace organizations and affiliated groups and organizations in the region..."

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A Silent Moment

Sri Lankan Prayer for Peace

God in Heaven, may you listen, feel and come down in us to face the reality of our brothers and sisters in the northern part of our island, Sri Lanka.

In the name of peace we are at war with each other, in the name of a united country we divide people as minority and majority ethnic groups.

We have forgotten that in the past we contributed to the violence on the island and now we put the whole blame on those who took up arms against our system.

We bomb the houses of the innocent, then bind the wounds of the victims to show off to the world that we care for them.

May your good Spirit give us true courage to say sorry for what we have done to our brothers and sisters. May we sit together to find a just and sincere solution to our problems.

May the good Spirit help us to pardon one another and repair the damage done to each other!

May your Spirit illumine our eyes to see all people as brothers and sisters, children of the same God.

We pray that the beautiful day will come soon to us when we will be able to call you OUR FATHER in one voice and heart cheerfully.

AMEN

~ Br. Terrence Loyola FSC, Sri Lanka
(courtesy of CAFOD)

What's Going on in Asia

Hong Kong

Memorial Mass for the Victims of the Tiananmen Massacre

Twenty years ago, students in Beijing, China, led a movement against corruption and for democracy. The movement gained support nationwide and from Chinese communities around the world. Dishearteningly, the passion and vision of students was brutally crushed by the government on 4 June 1989. Now, how many were killed is still an unknown. Tears are still in the eyes and pain is still in the hearts of many Chinese people after 20 years. To commemorate the deceased in the Massacre and to inherit the spirit of the 1989 Pro-democracy Movement, different sectors in Hong Kong organized activities prior to the anniversary.

Within the Catholic Church in Hong Kong, the former bishop of Hong Kong, Joseph Cardinal Zen Ze-kium, led a special Mass for the commemoration of the Tiananmen Massacre on 29 May. About 500 people attended. During the Mass, Cardinal Zen stressed that, the demand for vindication does not come out of revenge. Indeed, it is a call for the non-repetition of

tragedy and the end of a culture of corruption and deception, which was the cause of the Pro-democracy Movement in 1989.

“The martyrs of Tiananmen died with Jesus Christ on the cross. They are with Jesus in the glory of the kingdom of heaven. Today, our mourning is also a hymn. At the resurrection we shall see their ever glorious youth,” Cardinal Zen said.

Cardinal Zen also borrowed from the Gospel of St. Matthew, saying, “The king says to us: I have laid down my life at Tiananmen and have handed on to you the mission. Have you taken up the banner from the hands of the martyrs and gone forward bravely to continue the struggle for democracy for the renewal of our country?”

He concluded that “every martyr of Tiananmen is a whole world for God, for the Blessed Mother Mary and for their parents. We have to honour them, not forget and not let them die in vain.”

Source: Sunday Examiner (English Catholic weekly in Hong Kong)

India

Ten Commandments for the Indian Voters

In view of the elections in April, the Commission for Justice, Peace and Development of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) in Dehli has prepared the “Ten Commandments for the Indian Voters” and encouraged its partners and networks to distribute it widely, as well as translate it into local languages.

The “Ten Commandments” is a useful resource for citizens to exercise their right to vote and suggests guidelines for voting wisely. The 10 points include:

- a reminder to ensure voters’ names are on the Electoral Roll, and to help ensure the poor, marginalized and unprivileged people also have their names there;
- advice on how to vote justly, such as the need to scrutinize the “Election Manifestos” of the political parties by ascertaining that their stand is in favour of vulnerable groups, and not to accept any bribe during the election;
- advice to cast votes early, bringing any valid government ID with photo, insist on Tendered Vote even if someone else has already voted in their names, and reminder that voters have the electoral right to abstain if no candidates are found satisfactory to vote for; and
- in case of complaints, such as bribery, bogus voting and any serious concerns like disenfranchisement of a whole community, voters are urged to report them immediately in writing to the relevant Electoral Officer at the state or the national level.

This is an important and practical initiative towards justice and peace in a society, as the right to vote is a

basic assurance for a democratic system with true representation in the government.

Source: National Commission for Justice, Peace and Development (NCJPD)

National Consultation on Advocacy and Networking

The Consultation, hosted by the Justice and Peace Commission—Mumbai at Sarvodaya, St Pius College, Mumbai, was held on 9-10 February. The idea was conceptualized by the Hotline India Local Advisory Committee at its meeting in April 2008, where advisors agreed to review the work of Hotline India (HL India) and proposed to have a meeting of persons involved in advocacy in the country to strengthen their networking to make a sustainable impact. The focus was on economic and social marginalization of people through social customs, religious practices and government policies, such as issues on Special Economic Zones (SEZ), intolerance against Dalits and discrimination against tribals and indigenous peoples.

Mr. Gordon D'Souza of Bombay Catholic Sabha gave the input on the issue of SEZ as a land-grab conspiracy depriving home and livelihood from people without provision for rehabilitation. In the group discussions that followed, it was noted that the problem in Orissa is about land-related conflict and that there seems to be a link between the forces of globalization and religio-politics.

The issue of Dalit Christians was exposed as being a prejudiced practice by both Hindus and Christians. Dr. Kumar Prashant, Mr. Kamal Digal and Ms Sara Naik, spoke about the situation in Kandhamal—where the latest wave of violence against Christians in Orissa started in August 2008. Ninety percent of the Christians killed are Dalits, and the inaction and apathy of the Church has encouraged the Hindutva forces to terrorize Christians, who may have turned to the Maoists for protection.

Fr. Bosco, SJ shared about the plight of Dalits in Erarayur in the Pondicherry-Cuddalore Archdiocese, where the Church is complicit in perpetuating caste distinctions, while Mr. Franklin Thomas outlined details of the Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed in the Supreme Court demanding equal rights for Dalit Christians, and requested the organizer to place the liberation of Dalit Christians on its agenda.

The struggle of the Adivasi (indigenous peoples in India) was explained by Mr. C.R. Bijoy, an activist with extensive experience with tribal issues, tracing the origins of the problem, analyzing government policies and presenting viable responses for the restoration and protection of the dignity and rights of the Adivasi.

At the close of the proceedings, Fr. Allwyn D'Silva, member of HL India Advisory Committee and supervisor of HL-Mumbai, addressed the participants about strengthening and expanding the network of HL India, so as to make its social advocacy more effective.

It was resolved that the core groups, consisting of participants from different regions and acting in an individual capacity, would be formed to work further on issues discussed, in collaboration with HL India in Mumbai, Delhi and Wayanad (Kerala).

Source: Chetana (Newsletter of the Justice and Peace Commission of Mumbai)

People's Manifesto 2009

In order to raise their concerns with political parties before the elections, hundreds of grassroots workers and activists worked for three days in Delhi to formulate a People's Manifesto, which they plan to send to different political party offices and leaders. The South Asian Peoples' Initiatives (SAPI), a Jesuit people's forum in India which has been taking up national concerns, coordinated this initiative.

The Manifesto, which was endorsed initially by 43 organizations across India, talks about the current situation in which poor and marginalized communities have become victims of the narrow interests of political parties, and face historical and systematic injustice. In view of the unsustainable development reflected in the widening gap between the rich and poor, failure to ensure equitable development, etc., which may lead to social unrest and derail the reform process itself, as well as the new liberal policy which leads to the increased contractualization, informalization, and casualization of work, dispossessing people of their livelihood, a new paradigm of development which is inclusive, holistic, sustainable and environmentally-friendly is very much needed.

The secular, democratic and social organizations and various people's movements from all parts of the country, therefore, voiced their concern and demanded action and commitment for the protection of human rights and pro-poor development. Below some of their urgent and non-negotiable demands are listed:

1. *protection of life and security*: including freedom from fear of violence, peaceful co-existence, promotion of food security, enactment of old age and pension schemes, and cut of defense budget;
2. *promotion of peace and harmony through human rights*: protection from arbitrary arrest and illegal detention, repeal of all draconian laws, stop using anti-terror laws against the poor, minorities and human rights movements;
3. *guarantee of basic necessities for all*: free and compulsory elementary education, establishment of a mechanism to assess quality of education, normative curriculum for all categories of schools, ensure safe drinking water for all, provision of low cost housing;
4. *expansion of livelihood opportunities*: enact national minimum wage policy, promote rural development, repeal Special Economic Zones Act, ensure minimum support prices for agricultural produce;

5. *protection of Dalits, Adivasi and indigenous peoples*: enact comprehensive National Dalit Policy and National Tribal Policy, stop development-induced displacement, abolition of manual scavenging, ensure Adivasi access to forest and non-timber forest products, restore all alienated lands of tribals and other sections;
6. *gender justice*: implement the 33% reservation to women in assemblies and Parliament, enforce equal wage for equal work, enact domestic workers law to ensure their rights, dignity and protection from exploitation by agencies, prevent large-scale trafficking of women and children;
7. *freedom of religion and minority rights*: enact Communal Violence Act, ensure equal rights to Dalit Christians and Muslims, adequate compensation to victims of Bhopal gas tragedy, Gujarat victims and Kandamal victims;
8. *promotion of transparent governance, accountability and people's participation*: effectively implement Right to Information in private and public sectors, speed up the judicial reforms to give justice to the poor; and
9. *preservation of environment and promote sustainable development*: no development project should be sanctioned at the cost of environmental damage, strictly implement environmental protection laws.

As they embark on this long and challenging journey, they also invite others in the country to join their move towards an egalitarian, inclusive, secular, democratic and cultural-pluralistic India.

Source: South Asian Peoples' Initiatives

Japan

Public Forum on the Peace Constitution Forum in the Philippines

A round-table discussion about Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution was carried out in the Public Forum on the Peace Constitution, organized by the Ecumenical Bishops Forum and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, in partnership with the Catholic Bishops Conference of Japan.

Representatives of different churches gathered to share a common vision of enhancing the character of Article 9 as "a world treasure" to call for an end to war culture. From the Catholic Church, there were Most Rev. Deogracias S. Iñiguez, Jr., D.D., co-chairperson of the Ecumenical Bishop Forum, Most Rev. Broderick S. Pabillo, D.D., Auxiliary Bishop of Manila, Fr. Francis Fukamizu of the Catholic Council for Justice and Peace (Japan), and also Most Rev. Michael Goro Matsuura, D.D. of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Japan, who joined several priests from Protestant churches and speakers from Bayan, a multi-sectoral campaign center in the Philippines. Bishop Goro Matsuura reported on the current movements in Japan over Article 9.

To affirm the commitment to international peace and to halt any alteration of the constitutional provision of peace, plans for collective actions were drawn up:

- to propagate the issues of peace and security in church communities and exchange of stories and experiences among the people;
- to promote the culture of peace and security in Asia by speaking out against militarist solutions to principled dissents and oppose militaristic mindsets in government, such as the practice of appointing retired military generals to key civilian positions in the Philippines;
- to encourage churches to engage and support parliamentarians and political parties espousing peace and justice and ecological issues by lobbying; and
- to promote inter-parliamentary cooperation between Japan and the Philippines on these issues.

In March, the Japanese government deployed the Self-Defense Force to combat piracy in Somalia. The government also presented a draft law to expand the purposes for which military force could be used, including the protection of foreign ships. It is feared that the intention of revision or re-interpretation of Article 9 will distort its aspiration for international peace. Instead of the expansion of army force, a humble and realistic foreign policy should be developed. *The Communiqué from the Public Forum on the Peace Constitution* stated,

“The future of the world cannot be left in the hands of politicians and business alone, much less in the hands of any single country. It also rests on communities of peoples coming together in mutual respect, interdependence and co-existence. The church as a faith community incarnates this vision.”

Sources: The Communiqué from the Public Forum on the Peace Constitution, AsiaNews

Pakistan

Meeting on Extremism and Religious Minorities

The National Commission for Justice and Peace - Pakistan organized a meeting of Bishops and Church leaders on “Extremism and Religious Minorities in Pakistan” in Lahore on 22 May, followed by a press conference at the Press Club Lahore.

In the press statement, the Christians of Pakistan expressed concern about the situation of violence in their country, particularly the situation created by religious extremists and militants that have resulted in loss of human life, spread of hatred and confusion about the democratic system in the country. People of Pakistan are called to recognize the reality of hatred, discrimination and injustice propagated in the name of religion. The government is reminded that power-sharing and fair distribution of resources have not been achieved, which is reflected in the situation of religious minorities which has not improved.

In response to the situation of the internally displaced persons in areas with military operations, Church organizations and individuals are already lending their support to the victims. However, they further demand structural, legal and policy reforms to eliminate religious extremism in the country.

They called on the federal and provincial governments to:

- remove all undemocratic and discriminatory statutory laws and practices;
- support one person one vote and joint electorate irrespective of religious affiliations, which is hoped to inculcate social justice for the marginalized sections of the society; and
- remove all biases and discrimination in the school curriculum.

They also committed to:

- observe a day of prayer and fasting on 30 May for the restoration of peace and solidarity with families/people affected by extremism;
- organize rallies throughout the country on 13 June 2009 to call attention to the demands; and
- observe 16 August as a Social Justice Sunday for all marginalized in Pakistan.

The statement was endorsed by Archbishop Lawrence Saldanha, Archbishop of Lahore, Moderator of the Church of Pakistan Salvation Army, and leaders of the Presbyterian Church Pakistan and National Council of Churches.

Source: National Commission for Justice and Peace - Pakistan

Singapore

Singapore: Commemoration Event on the “Operation Spectrum”

Concerned Singaporean gathered in Hong Lim Park on 21 May 2009 to mark the 22nd anniversary of the “Operation Spectrum”.

The “Operation Spectrum”

“Operation Spectrum” refers to a series of arrests, from 1987-1988, launched by the Internal Security Department of Singaporean government. On 21 May 1987, sixteen people were arrested in their homes or work places, on the charge of being a member of a “clandestine communist network”. According to the Internal Security Act (ISA), the arrested were denied judicial review and detained without trial. The detainees were treated inhumanely during interrogation, including beating, sleep deprivation and imprisonment in freezing cold rooms for long hours. They were also threatened with the imprisonment of their beloved ones and being indefinitely detained. Under the continual physical and mental torture, their only chance of being released was to confess as being Marxists in the public media.

Vincent Cheng, the Secretary of Justice and Peace Commission in Singapore at that time, recalled in the book, *That We May Dream Again*:

“To mitigate the duress, I decided to allow myself to be abused and bullied into writing tracts of self-incriminating lies and half-truths. It seemed less painful to surrender in the interrogation room, but it was more painful when I was put back in the cell. There I would shed tears, stemming from my sense of utter powerlessness, loss of self-esteem, and constant worry over how my ‘confession’ would harm others.”

Having involuntarily confessed, on 20 June 1987, all of the detainees were sentenced to a detention order of one to two years. However, six more people were arrested on the same day.

The political violence which kept people in rueful and fearful silence through unjust treatment was intolerable. On 18 April 1988, nine former detainees released a statement:

- denying the government accusation of being Marxist conspirators;
- alleging ill-treatment under detention in 1987;
- claiming the government discouraged them from engaging legal counsel and taking legal action; and
- condemning their coercive TV confessions in 1987, which any decision about their penalty depended on.

This statement induced the re-arrest and extension of detention orders in 1988.

In “Operation Spectrum”, a total of 22 people, including social workers, lawyers, businessmen and theatre practitioners, were arrested. Most of them were involved in Catholic movements for social justice and human rights, while the others were artists from the drama group, the Third Stage, was concerned with social issues.

Instead of participating in subversive activities, those detainees acted for justice in a genuine pursuit of a society without oppression. To translate their faith into praxis, they strived for the empowerment of people through repealing unjust policies and building community through publications and seminars. Those activities challenged the authority of the government which eventually decided to clampdown on the dissidents with explicit violence.

Commemoration event

Twenty-two years have passed, little improvement in freedom of expression in Singapore is seen. Nowadays, the incident is still known as the “Marxist Conspiracy”

among many young Singaporeans. However oppression can never repress the dream of people to live out their beliefs and to build a just society. On 21 May 2009, a group of 50 people attended the commemoration event in which the organizers, a group of activists led by artist-cum-film-maker, Seelan Palay, criticized the ISA, and the former detainees of “Operation Spectrum” gave speeches. The poem titled *That We May Dream Again*, from a new book with the same title by former ISA detainees, was read.

Ms Teo Soh Lung, 60, said, “I’m touched that they remember things from so long ago... I hope there can be more openness. I hope the ISA will be abolished.”

The event was mainly organized by young people. They called for the abolition of the ISA and establishment of a “truth and reconciliation committee” to investigate the human rights violations committed 22 years ago. A society with freedom is the dream of everyone across different generations.

Sources: That We May Dream Again (http://yoursdp.org/index.php/news/singapore/2095-yes-that-we-may-dream-again), The Straits Times

Sri Lanka

Survivors Get-Together at Sri Lankan New Year

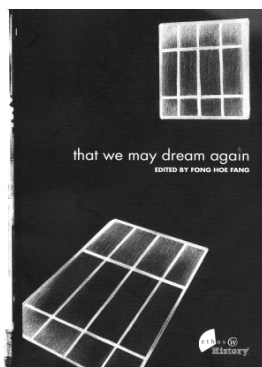
A get-together of survivors of rape/torture and families of missing persons was held on 8 April in Kandy on the Sinhalese/Tamil New Year. There were 130 participants with Bishop Vianney Fernando, Bishop of the central Province, as the chief guest.

There was a blessing from different religions, and games were organized for the children, followed by distribution of New Year gifts. The Bishop expressed the solidarity of the Catholic Church with all the victims in their struggle for justice, as he addressed the gathering. In return, the participants thanked the Bishop for all the guidance and assistance given to them in their struggle with the judicial process since 2001.

Source: Human Rights Office, Kandy

Situation in the North

On 25 March, leaders of the Anglican and Catholic Church issued a statement of concern about the deteriorating plight of civilians trapped in the Vanni area. The people, especially children, desperately need food, shelter and physical security. Although a “no-fire” zone has been declared by the government and arrangements have been made for the sick and injured to be transported for treatment, Church leaders desperately called for the evacuation of all civilians with the help of religious leaders and others who are willing to facilitate the effort. They also called for permission to be given to the UN, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other reputed organizations for access into Vanni, to facilitate and



monitor the evacuation and other humanitarian operations.

In April, new safety zones declared by the Sri Lankan government continued to be attacked by bombs and cluster shells, injuring many innocent civilians daily. It was reported that chemical weapons and internationally-banned white phosphorus were used in the last offensive against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to capture the zones not under the government control. Humanitarian and medical staff in the area called on the international community to demand that the government of Sri Lanka to enter into an immediate ceasefire and allow monitors to ensure that no chemical weapons are used.

The situation of starvation continued as the government imposed an economic blockade which includes a ban on basic necessities, like rice, vegetables, curry stuffs, milk powder for infants and lactating mothers, medicines, etc. By mid-May, even hospitals came under heavy shell attack. At one point, there were 196,000 internally displaced persons recorded from Vanni, which is around 40 percent of the total population recorded in November 2008. There is fear that the exact number of civilian deaths and missing cannot be calculated.

In response, the Catholic Church, through its Human Development Centre-Caritas Vanni in Jaffna, the diocese's social service agency, continues to assist the displaced, offering church centres, placing them in camps, and supplying food and other relief items. Seventeen priests, together with 22 sisters have chosen to remain in the war zone to assist the refugees. At the end of April, two of the priests were seriously injured in the bombings, one of them, Fr. T.R.Vasanthaseelan, was struck by artillery shrapnel on 23 April in Valaignarmadam where he was providing food and shelter to thousands of people, and suffered severe injuries to both his legs, one of which had to be amputated. On 8 May, one of the staff of Caritas Vanni was killed in a shell attack at Mullivaikal.

Meanwhile, aid workers continue to be threatened, arrested, abducted and killed. Lawyers and defenders acting for victims of abuse have also been victims of attacks, such as Mr. Armitha Ariyaratne, Attorney-at-law, who was threatened with death by police officers for representing a family in a complaint of torture, and Mr. Santha Fernando, Secretary for Justice and Peace in the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL), who is particularly involved in the promotion of justice among the less privileged sections of society, has been detained since 27 March 2009 in the Terrorism Investigation Division of the Sri Lankan police. No specific reason for his arrest or detention has been given so far. Media workers have also become high profile targets, being barred from entering conflict areas and threatened, intimidated and violently assaulted. Anti-terrorism legislation has also been used to arrest and detain them.

The attack by the Sri Lankan Army on the LTTE officially ended on 19 May 2009 after the defeat and death of the LTTE leader, ending a nearly 30-year civil war, with over 80,000 killed and millions displaced. However, the suffering of the people continued.

During the 11th Special Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council on "The human rights situation in Sri Lanka" held on 26-27 May 2009, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders presented an oral statement, highlighting the significant increase in the number of internally displaced people and human rights violations by all parties to the conflict in the North of Sri Lanka, after the abrogation of the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement in January 2008. Serious human rights violations remain widespread throughout the country, including enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, torture and other ill-treatment, while perpetrators enjoy complete impunity. Those who denounced those violations have been facing on-going hostility and threats.

These events illustrate the situation of insecurity faced by human rights defenders in Sri Lanka, exacerbated by the public statement by the country's Human Rights Minister discrediting human rights defenders after Sri Lankan NGOs denounced human rights violations during the UN Human Rights Council in March.

Sources: OMCT, Sunday Examiner, AsiaNews

Thailand

Responding to Climate Change: The Challenge of Adaptation and Mitigation for Thai Tourism

While it may boost the economy, the tourism industry has adverse effects on the environment. Seeing the need to respond to climate change which leads to soil erosion, decrease in bio-diversity, and migration of animals and people, a workshop on climate change was held by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace - Thailand in September 2008, in collaboration with the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism. The workshop advocated alternative tourism which could be more environmental-friendly. To enhance the effect of the workshop, participants were encouraged to disseminate information about the World Tourism Day which was marked on 27 September.

Source: Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (Thailand)

CCJP Camps on Human Rights

Recognizing the importance of human rights education, the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace has been organizing human rights training courses since 2005. On 14 September 2008, a training course on human rights education was held at Assumption College Sriracha for teachers, staff and mentors from kindergarten, primary and secondary schools. The aim of the programme was to equip educators for human

rights education in mainstream school settings. The origin of human rights, international human rights treaties, particularly child rights, were introduced. The programme attracted 290 participants.

Apart from training for teachers, the human rights training targeted youth. On 26-28 September 2008, a human rights camp for youth from ethnic groups was organized in Chiangmai. Around 50 young people from six ethnic groups, Karen, Akha, Lahu, Hmong, Mien and Lawa, participated in the camp. Likewise, the young people learned about international human rights treaties, however, with the focus on the rights of ethnic minorities. Targeting the youth, the programme was also designed in an interactive way, with games and exercises to stimulate discussion among participants. Besides teaching human rights, the young people were also encouraged to reflect on their responsibilities towards the rights of others.

Source: Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (Thailand)

Issues of Concern/Events

The following articles are excerpts from various sources and information channelled to *ACPP-Hotline Asia*, on topics of concern identified by the network at the recent *JPW* meetings.

TFD Award Nomination

To honor individuals or organizations that made significant contributions to the advancement of democracy and human rights in Asia, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) established the Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award in 2006. Reporters Without Borders (2006), Dr. Cythia Maung (2007) and Dr. Sima Samar (2008), are the laureates since its establishment. The deadline for nomination is 30 June 2009. The award will be presented on International Human Rights Day on 10 December 2009. A sculpture and a US\$100,000 grant will be given to support the on-going work of the winner.

For inquiries, please email TFD at <award@taiwandemocracy.org.tw> or call the TFD at +886-2-2708-0100 ext. 211. The nomination form can be downloaded at <<http://www.tfd.org.tw/english/docs/2009%20ADHRA%20Nomination%20Form.doc>>. Please also visit the website of the Award for more information, <http://www.tfd.org.tw/english/HTML/ADHRA_2009_main.html>.

Source: Taiwan Foundation for Democracy

ACPP Training Workshop Series in Hong Kong

Development and human rights have commonly been regarded as independent concepts or even contradictory to each other. In the time of financial crisis, the rise of unemployment, wage decreases, suspension of labour rights, discrimination and other economic hardship

were described as being an inevitable phenomenon in order to stabilize the economic situation. To respond to these challenges, NGOs are fighting against social injustice and are calling for policy changes. Seeing the need for human rights analysis and campaigning for the livelihood of people, *ACPP* is organizing a Rights-based Approach (RBA) Workshops Series, "Enhancing Advocacy in a Time of Crisis - Better Advocacy Using the Rights-Based Approach" for its staff and other NGO workers in Hong Kong from April to June 2009.

As stated in the name of the workshop, the sessions aim to use the RBA as a tool to develop more accurate analysis as the basis of effective strategies and appropriate tactics to deal with similar challenges. On the top of that, international human rights mechanisms and standards were introduced in the workshops to equip participants with grounds for their campaigns. The four-session workshop also provides an opportunity for participants to initiate their human rights campaigns and apply the introduced campaign strategies to the issues.

Mr. André Frankovits from the Human Rights Council of Australia, is the main resource person of the workshop. He is a veteran campaigner in the area of economic and social rights and has gained an international reputation in the field of human rights, development and Rights-Based Approach. Twelve participants, including staff of *ACPP*, have enrolled in the workshop.

Source: ACPP

Basic Communities Can Be More Like Clubs Than Church

The formation of Basic Christian Communities has been regarded as a revitalization mechanism for the Church. However, an expert on small communities, Filipino Redemptorist priest Fr. Amado Picardal, gave a reminder that the small cells in neighbourhoods, inside classrooms, within seminaries, small prayer groups, etc. may have an inclination towards exclusion and only serve the members of the group.

Fr. Picardal further explained the initial creation of small group was not because of the need of the members, but owing to the urge of the parish priests or visiting organization. Another problem is the sustainability of the groups, as they deeply rely on efforts of the priest or organization, which discourages members from developing their own leadership. The group may fall apart when the priest or organization is transferred to another place. As such, it may be unable to serve the purpose of renewal of Church.

Another critique of small groups is related to social response. Undoubtedly, Church communities have the responsibility to respond to social injustice like, extra-judicial killings, environmental destruction, poverty, hunger, armed conflict, otherwise, Christians may lose

relevance in the society. Nevertheless, Basic Ecclesial Communities, which are comprised of six to ten members, may have the tendency to remain inward-looking, maybe due to lack of capacity, resources or awareness to respond, and fail to apply the bible-sharing and liturgies to the social reality. As a result, members of small groups may only see the needs among themselves, and neglect the importance of social justice in the society.

To overcome the challenges of growth of the Church, both quantitatively and qualitatively, Fr. Picardal suggests that group formation should integrate social involvement into their movement and move forward towards serving the needs of Church and communities instead of individuals in the group.

Source: Sunday Examiner

Justice and Peace Resources

Chinese Recognized as the First Non-European Language in Holy See Website

From March 2009, Chinese language has been established as the eighth official language and the first non-European tongue to be used by the Holy See website. All papal texts, as well as the Vatican official websites, are now provided in Chinese, both the traditional and simplified characters. The establishment of a Chinese section on the official publications is seen as an intention of the Vatican to develop relations with China.

Sources: AsiaNews, Sunday Examiner

Prayer for World Environment Day

World Environment Day (WED), established by the United Nations in 1972 and observed on 5 June every year, aspires to raise the global awareness of the environment, enhance political attention and call for action. The WED 2009 was held in Mexico with the theme of “Your Planet Needs You-UNite to Combat Climate Change”.

For the WED 2009, the Commission for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation USG/USIG (the Commission of JPIC, USG/USIG) has prepared a prayer to summon all the brothers and sisters join together and reflect upon the creation of God. The prayer has been translated into 11 languages and is available on <http://jpicformation.wikispaces.com/>.

According to the booklet prepared by the Commission of JPIC, USG/USIG, *The Earth Community: In Christ through the Integrity of Creation towards Justice and Peace for All*,

We must re-discover the value and sacredness of the created world as a revelation of the divine where each human person sees himself or herself as an integral and significant part of that creation, interconnected and interdependent, respecting the

intrinsic nature of every creature and striving to build koinonia - an earth community - not just between humans, but inclusive of every creature.

The booklet includes fact finding, theological reflection and action suggestions about environmental and ecological issues. Along with the WED 2009 Prayer, this booklet is a good resource for transformation in aspects of individual and community. It can be downloaded from http://jpicformation.wikispaces.com/EN_creation.

Sources: World Environmental Day Prayer, The Earth Community: In Christ through the Integrity of Creation towards Justice and Peace for All

Sri Lanka: Winning the Peace of Sri Lankan Tamil

The 30-year civil war in Sri Lanka came to an end in May 2009. However, instead of relief to the civilians, the post-conflict situation is still precarious. The Sri Lankan Army eliminated the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) remnants at the cost of the lives of thousands of innocent civilians who are trapped in the war zone. The safety and future of Sri Lankan Tamil is still unknown. Responding to this, Ravi Nair of the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre, introduced a series of 3 articles.

Ravi Nair started by looking into the policy and strategy of the Sri Lankan government in the post-conflict situation. If there is an intention to build a pure Sinhalese-Buddhist country, the internally displaced persons may be “encouraged... to leave Sri Lanka for India or join the Tamil diaspora elsewhere and in a sense depopulate part of the north of that island.” The remaining civilians, regardless of their ethnicity, may not be able to access the humanitarian assistance from international agencies, as Sri Lanka government allegedly prevents the revival of the LTTE.

Having lost the war, the Sri Lankan Tamil must win peace. The second feature suggested some concrete plans to ensure the rights and safety of Sri Lankan Tamil. Rather than a militant strategy, a new campaign is needed to achieve solidarity and support across India, with democrats in Sri Lanka and international communities. The target of mobilization includes:

- Tamil civil society in the form of an NGO bringing Tamils across the world together;
- Southern India with affinities of language, ethnicity and kinship and media;
- Indians in general;
- Tamil diaspora groups in different countries; and
- all democratic Sri Lankans, Jaffna Tamils, Colombo Tamils and the hill Tamils, as well as democratic Sinhalese, Muslims and Burghers.

As the information about Sri Lanka is currently biased and controlled by Sri Lankan government, Churches, in response to the suffering of Tamils, can disseminate the news about Sri Lanka to reveal the realities, in order to

encompass the network and remind people of the obligations of Sri Lanka and our respective governments to human rights.

The third feature illustrated the obligations of international communities to prosecute human rights violators. To restore the human rights mechanism, the Tamil diaspora in different parts of the world should enter into negotiations with credible human rights NGOs and law firms to assess the possibility of seeking redress and bringing perpetrators to justice.

The full version of the series, including *Summer Winds Augur Ill for the Sri Lankan Tamil, Winning the Peace in Sri Lanka, Investigating War Crimes in Sri Lanka*, is available at <http://ravinair.blogspot.com/>.

Source: the Dissenter

JPW Exchange Corner

Sharing of Ruki Fernando, the Tji Hak-soon Award recipient 2009

Mr. Ruki Fernando of Sri Lanka is the recipient of the Bishop Tji Hak-soon Justice and Peace Award 2009. Below are some highlights from his acceptance speech presented in Seoul on 21 April 2009.

Acknowledging the inspiration of the life and work of Bishop Tji Hak-soon of South Korea, Ruki briefly shared about his experience in Sri Lanka with people who struggle against injustice courageously in spite of oppression, imprisonment and various challenges. He has encountered people who were detained, later killed, abducted, disappeared, threatened, intimidated, ridiculed and even fled the country, because they highlighted human rights violations, opposed the killing of civilians, forcible displacement and recruitment of children in the armed forces, etc. They suffer because they chose to prevent terrorism by non-violent means, through rule of law and respect for human rights.

Ruki especially mentioned those who continue to struggle, such as victims of abuse, their families, journalists, lawyers, humanitarian workers, religious leaders, etc. who are working to help displaced people, document abuses or promote ethnic harmony.

The war in the North has three main parties:

- Tamil civilians: although they are a minority in the country, the majority of those killed, displaced or arrested are Tamils. They suffer so disproportionately, the war can be seen as “war against Tamil civilians”;
- Sri Lankan government: it is not helpful in the situation, unable to prevent abuse and unwilling to take action against those responsible, and also showed unwillingness to accept international humanitarian assistance; and
- Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE): seen as the main aggressor, the LTTE has chased away the Muslims from the North, massacred Buddhist monks

and Sinhalese villagers, bombed places of worship, and made the Tamil community suffer through forcible recruitment of children, travel restrictions, and killed Tamils who have dissenting views.

According to Ruki, it is important to note that the LTTE is about 30 years old, but discrimination and harassment of the Tamil Community has been on-going for more than 50 years. While Tamil groups have initially struggled peacefully for equality and sharing of power, they were brutally repressed by the Sinhalese-dominated government. Thus the Tamil struggle evolved into an armed struggle, demanding a separate state.

It is sad to note that most members of the majority Sinhalese community and members of human rights community support the war, and see atrocities like disappearances, killings, injuries, displacement and detention of civilians as acceptable. Many people, including Buddhist monks and Christian clerics, do not agree that Tamil people have legitimate grievances about the discrimination and harassment they face. At Christmas 2008, one church prayed for military victory for the government, but there were no prayers of remembrance for those displaced, killed, injured and forcibly disappeared and their family members.

In this context, Ruki shared his great inspiration in working with people who have courageously helped affected people and spoke out on their fate, including bishops, priests, religious, lay people and people without faith. Several church leaders have opted to remain among with the trapped civilian population, like-minded lay people, priests and religious from the South have started a group called the Christian Solidarity Movement. They visited the war zone, met people, prepared documentation and started a blog. They organized public prayers, collected financial assistance for the victims, talked to diplomats and people in UN and others who could help in changing the situation.

Finally, as he thanked those who have worked with him, supported and encouraged him, including the Tji Hak-soon Foundation for giving the award at this critical time in Sri Lanka, he earnestly appealed, “please mobilize Korean people, Christians, church leaders, government leaders, other influential persons and groups, to support Sri Lankan people, and human rights defenders, as we fight for our rights, our dignity, our lives.”

Ruki has been involved with International Young Christian Students, Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC, Forum Asia and the Law and Society Trust in Sri Lanka, and currently has committed himself to investigating and revealing the truth of those arrested or murdered by the Sinhalese-led government to the United Nations. He participated in the JPW Meeting of 2003 held in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Sources: Speech by Ruki, UCANews

Award for Meehboob Sada of Pakistan

Fellow-JPW, Mr. Mehboob Sada, Director of the Christian Study Centre at Rawalpindi, Pakistan, was one of the 11 outstanding citizens awarded a gold medal by the Nazriya Pakistan Council (NPC) on 20 March for their outstanding contribution in various fields of national life. He was recognized in the field of Inter-religious dialogue. The governor of North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Owais Amhad Ghani, was the chief guest on the occasion.

Mehboob Sada is a Christian inter-faith harmony activist who played an important role in hosting the JPW Meeting in 2005, Pakistan.

Source: Minorities' Concern of Pakistan

Reflection for World Refugee Day (20 June)

For most of us, the word “refugee” indicates a political and legal issue rather than a theological one. The word “refugee” is not mentioned in the Bible. However, the stories of people in exile and displaced people are profound in the Old and New Testaments. The situation of these people was the same as refugees nowadays.

Jesus as a Displaced Person

The baby Jesus is often portrayed reposing in the arms of Mother Mary and being worshipped by the Magi. However, behind this image, it is a refugee family escaping from the persecution of King Herod and a woman who had to give birth to her child in the stable instead of a properly equipped place. After Jesus returned to Jewish society and started his mission, his political stand for the poor brought him into the situation that “he came to his own home and his own people did not accept him” (*John1:11*). This understanding is contained in Catholic Social Teaching today. The Second Vatican Council, ‘*the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*’, Nos 6-7, stated,

“While on earth she[the Church] journeys in a foreign land away from the Lord the Church sees herself as an exile... following in trial and in oppression the paths he [Jesus] trod.”

In his missionary journey, Jesus inclusively interacted with the outcasts, in terms of race, class, religion, etc, of society. The enrichment of life did not only happen to those who received care and assistance from Jesus, but Jesus was also inspired by these people, who always showed great faith in God during times of hardship!

The story of Canaanite woman

In the time of Jesus, there was a strong distinction between Israelite and Gentiles. Israelite deeply believed that they were the only people chosen to enjoy the salvation of God. Although they were colonized and oppressed by the Romans, who were also Gentiles, they were contemptuous of the other non-Israelite groups, such as Canaanites.

According to *Matthew 15:21-28*, Jesus encountered a Canaanite woman who requested him to cure her only daughter. Contrary to his compassion towards the poor, Jesus did not promise anything to the Gentile woman immediately and finally said, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel... .. It is not good to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.” He repeated the commandment that the mercy exclusively belonging to Israelite was not supposed to be shared with an outsider! This woman was too powerless to change this deep rooted Jewish mindset, but she did not give up. This much discriminated against woman, who was a Gentile, a woman and a single parent, in traditional Jewish society, argued publicly with Jesus, in front of the disciples. She demanded that Jesus respect her as a subject with human dignity, saying, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” By this radical analogy, she articulated the belief that everyone, no matter who they were, is born with inherent dignity and deserves basic respect in life. Even a dog should get what it needs from the master to survive, why should not her daughter deserve a chance to be healed, by God? If we look into the story of the Canaanite woman, we may wonder how she thought Jesus may help her? Who would be willing to reach out to such a lowly woman in Jewish society? We may not realize what used to happen to a woman without the entitlement to work, who continuously spent her money on her daughter. If we read between the lines, we will see how the Canaanite woman, as well as her daughter, was deprived of her basic needs in life and security in society, because of her social status and position. Through this Canaanite woman, Jesus showed the love of God which is not limited by any boundaries, such as race, ethnicity, class, religion, etc. What would we do if we encounter this Canaanite woman in our life?

Human Dignity and Human Rights

Similar to the Canaanite woman, refugees are also marginalized people living in foreign lands. Nevertheless, the story of the Canaanite woman reminds us that God’s mercy is universal, it is for everyone regardless of their social status. The belief of this woman is synonymous with universal human rights. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article1* states,

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

Striving for a Just World Together

While the situation of refugees should be raised in our society, we should also be aware that emphasizing their vulnerability and hardship may further disenfranchise them and exclude them from participation in the very public affairs which are purportedly designed for their benefit. The Canaanite woman inspiringly

demonstrated another aspect of dispossessed. Instead of being an object of mercy, the dispossessed becomes a partner in our mission of striving for a just world.

Although the Canaanite woman's faith was great, it was never noticed by others because of her inferiority and lack of a chance to participate in society. However, Jesus engaged in dialogue with her, when the others asked him to send the woman away. With the chance of participation, the woman magnified the core message of the Gospel, which is the inclusive love of God, in public.

Similar to the woman, refugees are always deemed as inferior and dependent in society. We should be reminded that this is mainly because their basic rights, such as right to food, right to work, right to education, are withheld from them, thus their full human development and active participation in society are not fulfilled. Following the way of Jesus, we should assure refugees in our society of access to basic necessities and engage in dialogue with them so as to achieve a just and inclusive society, by enriching our understanding of the causes that produce refugees; international relationships, cultures of different places and theologies of different religions. We cannot reveal the whole creation of God, unless we, as people with differences, come together and learn from each other. It is definitely a great challenge but only in this way, can transformation take place individually and communally.

The coming 20 June 2009 is the World Refugee Day. To show solidarity with refugees and raise concerns over this issue, ACPP has issued an FYI, "Right to Education for Refugee Children in Thailand", focusing on refugees from Burma in Thailand and illustrating that the right to education is far more than placing children in schools. It must encompass the value of dignity. For more details, please visit: <http://www.acpp.org/jpc/fyi/FYI09-04.htm>

Refernce:

David Holdcroft SJ, "Refugees and Australia's Response-Politics, morality and the way forward", the Australia Catholic Social Justice Council, September 2008.
Rose Wu: "A Dissenting Church", the Hong Kong Christian Council and the Hong Kong Women Christian Council, 2003.

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