

JPW BULLETIN

Newsletter of the Justice and Peace Workers (JPW) Network of Asia-Pacific

July – September 2006, 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..."

A Silent Moment

What's Going On in Asia?

Hong Kong: Fact Finding Mission to the Philippines

India: RBA Workshops on Advocacy

Japan: Japan withdraws troops from Iraq; Koizumi's visit to the controversial shrine

Philippines: Abolition of the Death Penalty; Response to the Guimaras Tragedy

Singapore: New Employment Law in Singapore

South Korea: Villagers against US military expansion

Events

International Day of Peace (21 September)

Human Rights Education / Resources

Pope Benedict XVI on Social Justice

Catholic websites/sources from One Spirit

New book on Option for the Poor

JPW Exchange Corner

Church in Mongolia

Development of JPW initiatives

How to identify reliable web site?

A Silent Moment

God of Justice and Peace,
Mold our consciences according to justice,
And shape our hearts according to peace,
That we may recognize the talents that you have given us
To secure the rights of the poor, the oppressed, the sick and the
marginalized.

God, we are Your children.

Grant us the courage and strength to work for justice,

And in this way, live out our call to be peacemakers.

Source: Center of Concern

What's Going On in Asia?

Hong Kong

Fact Finding Mission to the Philippines

The Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese (HKJP) joined other human rights activists, lawyers and reporters to investigate the situation of extra-judicial killings in the Philippines in July 2006.

In the press conference after the fact finding mission, activists criticized the lack of independence of the Task Force "Usig", which was set up to investigate extra-judicial killings in the country. "Usig", a body that solely comprises members of the police, draws upon the entire register of activities of the police in terms of investigations.

To support the victims and local effort, HKJP had asked Cardinal Zen, bishop of Hong Kong to write an appeal to the Philippines consul-general in Hong Kong. Among the some 700 extra-judicial victims, a quarter of them are Church workers or clergy.

Source: HKJP

India

RBA Workshops on Advocacy

The National Commission for Justice, Peace and Development (NCJPD), Catholic Bishops' Conference of India will be organizing a capacity-building workshop on the Rights Based Approach (RBA) to Social Justice Advocacy. The workshop will be an introduction to "The RBA to Social Justice Advocacy". The workshop will be held on 22-26 October 2006.

The objectives are to introduce and train participants in the use of RBA with specific relevance to the Indian situation. Thirty-six participants will be selected from the 12 ecclesiastical regions of India working under the NCJPD. After the Workshop, they are expected to apply RBA to their work and contribute to social justice advocacy in their localities and as local partners of NCJPD, while those with sufficient experience will be expected to train others. Content will include: Catholic Social Teachings linkage to RBA, human rights framework, analysis, advocacy, strategic planning and follow-up.

The workshop is designed and will be run by a team from the ACPP and Human Rights Council of Australia who will act as workshop facilitators and resource persons. Some alumni of the previous workshop will also assist as facilitators or resource persons. The workshop is made possible by the generous sponsorship and contribution of Cordaid (Netherlands), Taiwan Foundation for Democracy and CRS-India.

Source: NCJPD

Japan

Japan withdraws troops from Iraq

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi announced on 20 June 2006 that Japan would withdraw its troops from Iraq, ending the Japanese military's riskiest and most ambitious overseas mission since World War II.

About 600 soldiers had been based in Samawa, capital of the southern province of Muthana, since January 2004, providing clean water and medical assistance, and repairing roads and buildings. The troops had been limited to humanitarian, non-combat duties due to Japan's pacifist Constitution.

The country, however, will formalize its military's global role. The Japanese Defence Agency Director-General, Fukushima Bukaga, said the country will consider a bill to make the Japanese Ground Self-Defence Force's international peace co-operation activities part of its regular duties.

Source: Reuters, South China Morning Post, International Herald Tribune (Asia-Pacific)

Koizumi's visit to the controversial shrine

On 15 August 2006, the anniversary of Japan's World War II surrender, the Prime Minister visited the Yasukuni Shrine enraging China and South Korea, two victims of past Japanese invasions. The latter two countries consider the visit a glorification of militarism.

Despite Mr. Koizumi's apology to victims of WW II during a national memorial service in honour of Japan's war dead after the visit, Japan's neighbours deem his visit a destructive move against ties.

Both South Korea and China have suspended summit meetings with Mr. Koizumi since his last visit.

Opinion within the country is diverse. More than 1,000 people marched in Tokyo to protest against the visit, and others staged candlelight vigils. However, public polls after this latest pilgrimage indicated rising domestic support to his visits, especially among younger Japanese, prompting concerns about a rise of nationalism.

The Yasukuni shrine honours 2.5 million war dead, including 14 people convicted as criminals by a 1948 war tribunal.

Source: International Herald Tribune (Asia Pacific), BBC News

Philippines

Abolition of the Death Penalty

At Easter, on 15 April 2006, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo announced the commutation of around 1,200 death sentences to life imprisonment in the Philippines.

On 7 June 2006, both the Senate and the House of Representatives approved separate bills to abolish the imposition of the 1994 death penalty law. Two weeks after the Congress passed the legislation, President Arroyo signed a law abolishing the death penalty, which makes the Philippines the 125th nation to abolish the death penalty in law or practice.

The abolition is believed to be due to pressure from the Roman Catholic Church and human rights groups. Some analysts believe that it is driven by political reasons - President Arroyo abolition of the death penalty in exchange for the support of the Church and bishops for her policies such as the revival of mining to bring in foreign investment and her push to change the country's US-style constitution.

Despite the abolition of the death penalty, people remain vulnerable to fundamental injustices. Arroyo's administration is accountable for the alarming increase in levels of extrajudicial killings. Task Force "Usig" (TFU), the government's investigative body, seems incapable of addressing the issue effectively.

In 1987, the Philippines took an innovative step as the first Asian country to abolish the death penalty. However, the death penalty was restored in December 1993 and the first execution was carried out in 1999.

Source: BBC news, Sunday Examiner

Response to the Guimaras Tragedy

Solar I, a tanker with two millions liters of oil on board, chartered by the Philippines' largest oil refiner Petron, sank 23.4 km from the southern coast of Nueva Valencia town in Guimaras on 11 August 2006. It is believed that 200,000 to 250,000 liters had leaked out from the tanker.

The spill damaged a large area of coastline and polluted fishing grounds, dive spots and a national marine reserve in the central Philippines.

It is one of the worst spills to hit the Philippines, and the government has appealed for international assistance with the clean-up. The removal of oil and tanker is still in the process. A resident who had been employed to work in the clean-up operations died on 22 September 2006, suspected to be due to toxic fumes coming from the bunker fuel. More respiratory illnesses are also recorded in oil spill affected areas.

A free concert was organized on 15 September 2006 for the tragedy in Guimaras, with a message from the people of Guimaras. Although the concert was free, the Society of the Divine Word and Cardinal Rosales asked for "donations of money or protective gear, food and medicines for the victims in

the stricken area from all religious congregations in the AMRSP and Friends."

Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Commission-Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (JPICC-AMRSP) issued the "Statement on the Guimaras Oil Spill Tragedy and the On-going Threats to Integrity of Creation" in August, expressing its concerns on the environment and the people affected by the oil spill. It also demanded Petron and the Department of Natural Resources to take immediate and accountable actions. For the full version of the statement, please go to:

http://www.acpp.org/jpwb/AMRSP_Guimaras_Statement.pdf.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) also appealed for the immediate removal of the remaining bunker fuel from the sunken tanker.

Source: JPICC-AMRSP, BBC news

Singapore

New Employment Law in Singapore

At the end of July, the Association of Employment Agencies and Casetrust came up with two standard contracts for employers of maids in Singapore.

The contracts will comprise of a service agreement between the agency and the employer and another employment contract between the employer and the maid. Under the agreement, there would be a well-defined replacement policy and a fairer refund policy reducing the possibility of disputes.

The new law is expected to provide better protection for domestic workers. The employment contract stipulates the minimum one day off entitlement for the maid in a month, if the day off is not taken, the employer would have to compensate the maid in cash.

The implementation of these contracts will create a level playing field resulting in greater professionalism among practitioners. Any dispute arising from the contract will be referred to accreditation bodies or employment agencies for mediation. If parties fail to come to terms, the dispute can be brought to an alternative resolution mechanism.

In Singapore, domestic workers do not enjoy labour rights, as domestic work is seen as informal work and is not recognized by labour law.

However, after the launch of standard contracts launched, all employment agencies accredited by the two bodies (Casetrust and Association of Employment Agencies) would have to implement them by the 15 September 2006. Employment agencies are not allowed to amend the service agreement or the employment contract without the prior approval of their accreditation body.

Source: Think Centre, Casetrust

South Korea

Villagers against US military expansion

On 13 September 2006, 22,000 riot police and 450 contracted construction workers bulldozed houses in the village of Daechuri and Doduri at dawn. The movement managed to wipe out 68 of the 90 houses which the Ministry of Defence targeted.

During the struggle, 10 residents received minor injuries. Some elderly residents suffered verbal insults from contracted construction workers. Destruction included not only houses, but also a farm warehouse with expensive farming equipment, including a USD100,000 tractor inside.

Many supporters were blocked by police checkpoints from entering the village several days before the event. Twenty-one

activists were arrested on the morning of 13 September for trying to enter the village area.

Despite the approaching deadline of relocation (31 October 2006), villagers put their hope into action by continuing to work in their gardens, organizing for the defense of their land, and preparing for a major demonstration in Seoul on 24 September.

South Koreans in the United States demonstrated their solidarity. In Washington DC, dozens of protestors took to the streets; supporters also protested outside the South Korean consulate in Honolulu in the second week of September.

According to the military newspaper *Stars and Stripes*, the US military plans to build new facilities on the farmers' land in order to improve the quality of life for American soldiers stationed in Korea. Those amenities include a new fitness center "complete with a gym, indoor pool, running track, and four-storey parking garage."

George Katsiaficas, a researcher at Harvard University's Korea Institute and president of the Peace Island Foundation reported that the American troops' relocation away from major population centers and the North Korean border could, paradoxically, increase the likelihood of war in the Korean Peninsula. In his opinion, the move "takes American forces out of the range of North Korean artillery and creates a situation where the United States could attack North Korea without Americans necessarily being directly threatened in the immediate counter attack." He sees the redeployment of US troops in South Korea as part of a larger strategy.

Source: OneWorld.net

Events

The following are excerpts from various sources and information channeled to ACPH-Hotline Asia.

International Day of Peace (21 September)

In September 2001, the member states of the United Nations unanimously adopted a day of global ceasefire and non-violence on 21 September and named it the International Day of Peace (IDP). The intention is to have the entire world observe a full day of "global ceasefire and nonviolence" where individuals, communities and countries in conflict lay down their arms and share a full day of peace. The vision is to build peace one day at a time.

All UN Member states, organizations of the UN system and regional NGOs are therefore invited to commemorate the IDP through education and public awareness and to cooperate with the United Nations in the establishment of the global ceasefire.

In support of the IDP, many religious, spiritual, interfaith and peace-based leaders, organizations and individuals representing a wide variety of traditions are advocating an "International Day of Peace Vigil" with the objective of "encouraging worldwide 24-hour spiritual observations for peace, non-violence and global ceasefire on IDP in every house of worship and place of spiritual practice, by all religious and spiritually based groups and individuals, by all men, women and children who seek peace in the world."

In 2006, the goal is to have IDP vigils in each of the 191 United Nations Member states and all are invited to the global effort to observe a minute of silence for peace at 12 noon on 21 September.

Among our JPW network, there are also initiatives around the region to commemorate IDP as an opportunity and rallying point to raise awareness on conflict prevention and peace building:

In the Philippines, a lecture series, a peace march and cultural programs were organized by the Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Commission – Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (JPICC-AMRSP) and its partners. The aim of these activities is to respond to the situations of injustices in the country, especially to highlight the present political and economic crisis and how to work together to overcome these.

In India, a Round-Table Conference on Peace and Non-Violence was held at St. Pius College, Mumbai on the themes: "Peace and Reconciliation Process - Post Communal Conflict in Gujarat" and "Perspectives on Peace and Conflict Resolution. The conference, organized by the Center for Study of Society and Secularism, the Vikas Adhyayan Kendra and Justice and Peace Commission - Mumbai, were conducted by Fr. Cedric Prakash, Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer and Dr. Ram Puniyani.

In Taiwan, a vigil to pray for peace was organized by the Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Desk – Association of Major Religious Superiors in Taiwan (JPIC-AMRS Taiwan) to raise public awareness of the IDP and to remember peace advocates, achievements and contributions made by all Peace-builders. The vigil was joined by other religions and graced by Msgr. Ambrose Madtha with a peace message on behalf of the Holy See. It was held at the One World Community Service Center, Hsintien City.

Further information about the IDP can be found at:

United Nations website:

<http://www.un.org/events/peaceday/2006/index.shtml>

InternationalDayofPeace.org: www.internationaldayofpeace.org

International Day of Peace Vigil: <http://www.idpvigil.com/>

World Council of Churches – Decade to Overcome Violence: www.overcomingviolence.org

A PDF Special Report "Yes, Peace Is Possible", from World Peace Emerging showcases many of the top activities happening on 21 September and the surrounding days:

http://www.worldpeaceemerging.com/book_store/catalog/product_info.php?ref=4&products_id=28&affiliate_banner_id=1

Human Rights Education/Resources

Pope Benedict XVI on Social Justice

Since Pope Benedict XVI was chosen as leader of the Catholic Church on 19 April 2005, he has made many important statements about the social aspects of the faith, including globalization, migration, inter-religious understanding, terrorism, development and aid, hunger and poverty etc. He also expressed his concern on the situation in conflict areas, such as Israel/Palestine and Darfur.

Helping people to have a better understanding on the Pope's teaching, the Center of Concern has consolidated a document with excerpts from the his speeches and writings since his election as Pope.

For those who are interested, please contact ACPH <hotline@acph.org> for the soft copy.

Source: Center of Concern

Catholic websites/sources from One Spirit

As some people have expressed a desire to know how to be informed about news of the Church and of Religious Life through the internet, ONE SPIRIT the following:

Vatican News: The webpage of the Vatican can be accessed at www.vatican.va. It provides much information on the past and present in several languages. By pressing the Info button, one

can get a daily news bulletin and even arrange for it to be sent directly to a personal email address. It gives, for example, a list of newly appointed bishops and of visitors to the Holy Father.

Zenit: This is a daily bulletin sent to those who request it and their edition for personal use is free of charge. It is one of the best sources on matters relating to the life of the Church and it comes in a variety of languages. To subscribe, please go to www.zenit.org and follow directions by pressing Subscribe to Zenit.

Asia News: News about the Church in Asia. It is a service of the PIME Fathers and has good information on China. It also offers a Chinese edition. The address is www.asianews.it.

Fides Service: It issues frequent bulletins with news on missions around the world. It can be accessed at www.fides.org. It also has a Chinese version.

Source: One Spirit

New book on Option for the Poor

A new edition of "Opting for the Poor", by Peter Henriot, SJ, has been published by the Center of Concern (COC). This book has six chapters about how to serve practically and with compassion, for and with the poor. It is designed for the classroom or for personal reflection. The chapters include:

- ◆ Challenging Our Church
- ◆ Tracing the History
- ◆ Clarifying the Issues
- ◆ Grounding the Task
- ◆ Applying the Option
- ◆ Affecting Our Lives

The new edition also includes a talk by Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Jesuits, on "Opting for the Poor." In addition there are "Tithing of Time" suggestions and a Biblical Reading list.

It can be purchased at the COC website:

<https://www.coc.org/index.fpl/1242/department/1.html>

Source: Center of Concern

JPW Exchange Corner

Church in Mongolia

At one of the preparation meetings for next JPW forum, it was mentioned that the network should involve more countries, especially where there was previously no representatives at the meetings, to strengthen each other's justice and peace work. As a first step to such networking, it is necessary to know more about the situation of the Catholic Churches in different countries in the Region.

According to an article on the Catholic Church in Mongolia, the Catholic Community is growing steadily. After the latest baptism this year, there are currently 370 Catholics in the 3 parishes of Ulaanbaatar, capital of Mongolia. The Church expects to build 3 more mission stations in other provinces which will be staffed by 18 priests and 40 sisters from 9 different religious missionaries.

Bishop Wenceslao Padilla (CICM), Prefect Apostolic of Ulaanbaatar, expressed his hope about the situation: "the fact that the government is taking steps to promote democracy is a reason for hope for the Catholic community."

Currently, the Church runs a home for more than one hundred children and a skill training centre on dressmaking and handicraft making.

Although the first evangelization of Mongolia goes back to the 7th Century, in reality the birth of the Church in the country only happened after the fall of the atheistic-communist regime, who had tried by all possible ways to end all forms of religiosity. Mongolia and the Holy See established diplomatic relations in 1997.

Source: One Spirit

Development of JPW initiatives

In the last meeting of the JPW in Pakistan, participants agreed to have sub-regional action plans. Among the achievements were:

- The Justice and Peace Fact Finding Mission in Japan held last November 2005, to study the situation of the US Military bases and related issues, and to support the people who are continuously working for peace through resistance against constitution change.
- Celebration and supporting initiatives on the International Day of Peace (IDP), 21 September, in Southeast Asia. The JPICC-AMRSP organized a series of activities leading up to the IDP, highlighting peace based on justice in the current situation, and invited solidarity from the network.

Regarding other initiatives from the previous JPW meetings, the JPW Bulletin has continued (since 2002) to serve as a venue to exchange and share news on justice and peace activities among the network. However, more contributions from different sub-regions and countries are still needed.

The upcoming JPW forum is expected to be held in late November 2007 in Delhi, India. More details will be shared later. Please keep posted.

How to identify reliable web site?

Anyone can publish anything on the Internet these days. To check whether Internet materials are reliable, one can ponder on these aspects: authority, accuracy, objectivity, currency and coverage.

Authority: Who is behind the material? Consider the background of the writer, is he an expert in the area of discussion? Or is there any sponsor working behind the material?

Accuracy: Are the material error-free and were they verified by editors?

Objectivity: Does the material provide biased opinion without providing a valid discussion?

Currency: Apart from checking whether the information is current, it is also important to check whether its links to other pages are functioning properly.

Coverage: Are the material covered, including its links in the website relevant to your research/discussion?

While these guidelines may only provide a preliminary framework, you can learn to think critically about WWW resources by visiting <http://lib.nmsu.edu/instruction/eval.html>. Make sure you check out the Bibliography section, where you can access to other resources on the topic.

This Bulletin is distributed by ACPH-Hotline-Asia (www.acpp.org) on behalf of the JP Workers network in Asia. Please send your feedback or comment to hotline@acpp.org.