

JPW BULLETIN

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

April – June 2007, 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: Series of Activities to Commemorate the June Fourth Massacre; HKJP Against Extra-judicial Killings in the Philippines

India: Workshop on Climate Change; National Training on Lobbying and Campaigning

Japan: Diet Passed Controversial Referendum Bill

Nepal: First Bishop Ordained in Nepal

Pakistan: Threats to Christian Community at Charsadda; Shadow Report on Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

Philippines: Statement on Environment and Military Campaign; Election Reflection Guide

South Korea: Struggle Against US Military Base Continues

Issues of Concern/Events

PP40 Seminar on "Populorum Progressio: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow"

The Ninth Asia Human Rights Award & Women Human Rights Special Award

Gwangju Asian Human Rights Folk School 2007

ACPP's Workshop on "Justice and Peace Work"

Justice and Peace Resources

Catechetical Aids in Mandarin

Resource on Climate Change for Earth Day

Catholic Teaching on Human Dignity

JPW Exchange Corner

Update on East Asia Sub-regional Action Plan

Update on the next JPW Meeting

A Silent Moment

At the time of elections. . .

Prayer for Leadership

Give us, O God,
leaders whose hearts are large enough
to match the breadth of our own souls
and give us souls strong enough
to follow leaders of vision and wisdom.

Give us hearts to choose the leader
who will work with other leaders
to bring safety
to the whole world.

We beg you, Great God,
give us the vision as a people
to know where global leadership truly lies,
to pursue it diligently,
to require it to protect human rights
for everyone everywhere.

Joan Chittister, OSB

Entire prayer available at www.benetvision.org
(courtesy of Center of Concern)

What's going on in Asia

Hong Kong

Series of Activities to Commemorate the June Fourth Massacre

Eighteen years after the June Fourth Massacre, the Justice and Peace Commission of Hong Kong Catholic Diocese (HKJP) kept its enthusiasm to alert people on the injustice that the Chinese authorities have yet to rectify. HKJP has organized a series of activities targeting different groups to reflect on the incident.

At the prayer gathering prior to the candle light vigil on 4 June 2007, Joseph Cardinal Zen, bishop of Hong Kong Catholic Diocese, shared that while opinions prevail in the society that it is better to leave history behind, the faithful are reminded that every human being is valuable for each one is a child of God. Furthermore, he reaffirmed that the innocent deaths of the victims are heroic for they have awakened the conscience of men.

Apart from protests, masses and the vigil gathering, the Commission has organized a forum reflecting on the economic and democratic development of China. Panel speakers comprised of university professors and news commentators presented dynamics relating to economic development, political development and people's response.

Two workshops were held for youth above 15 years old to learn about the 1989 incident which they did not have the opportunity to witness. The first workshop provided historical and religious reflection. The second workshop focused on "today": the Massacre's relevance to today's society.

Source: HKJP

HKJP Against Extra-judicial Killings in the Philippines

In solidarity with the victims of extra-judicial killings and human rights groups in the Philippines, Ms Jackie Hung of HKJP attended the hearing of Permanent Peoples' Tribunal (PPT) in the Netherlands in March.

The tribunal, an international opinion tribunal, independent from any State authority, examines and judges complaints regarding violations of human rights and rights of peoples that are submitted by the victims themselves or groups representing them. The tribunal has ruled that the Arroyo government and the government of George W. Bush are responsible for gross and systematic violations of human rights.

HKJP will join with other members of the HK Campaign for the Advancement of Human Rights and Peace in the Philippines in a forum presenting PPT's verdict. The forum, to be held on 15 June 2007 will discuss the verdict

and its implication for human rights development in the Philippines.

Source: HKJP

India

Workshop on Climate Change

To mark the 40th Anniversary of "Populorum Progressio" the Indian Network on Ethics and Climate Change (INECC), the Institute for Community Organization Research (ICOR) and the Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) – Mumbai will organize Training for Trainers Workshop on "Climate Change in the Context of Development." It will be held on 21-23 August at St. Pius College.

The Workshop aims to develop perspectives to understand changes in the climate system, look at the impact on marginalized people, and discuss, share and explore dimensions of climate change issues for climate sustainability. Topics will include climate change and its impact, ethical issues and Church's social teaching, policy issues and lifestyle implications.

Interested parties may contact the Justice and JPC - Mumbai at drtc@vsnl.com for more information or participation.

Source: Justice and Peace Commission - Mumbai

National Training on Lobbying and Campaigning

The National Commission for Justice, Peace and Development of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of India organized a national training on Human Rights and Social Advocacy at Bangalore from 10 to 15 May 2007. Lawyers and social activists, both religious and the laity attended the program.

Input varied from street theatre to faith-based reflection, participants were exposed to a wide range of topics, such as lobbying with the United Nations, children's rights and campaign planning.

The training was a fruitful one: participants agreed to exercise their leaning by taking up a nationwide campaign on the Right to Food. The immediate action plan is to focus on the awareness about Public Distribution System and Below Poverty Line Card. They proposed that, for example, the campaign can target parishes, community based organizations and schools on Justice Sunday (19 August) and in Global Week of Action (14-21 October).

Source: National Commission for Justice, Peace and Development

Japan

Diet Passed Controversial Referendum Bill

On 14 May 2007, the government succeeded in passing a bill that paves the way for a national referendum to make constitutional changes. Thus, Japan will be able to transform its "pacifist" nature and give more active power to its current armed forces. According to the terms

approved, a referendum will be held by 2010 where an absolute majority of votes will be needed.

A survey conducted by the Asahi Shimbun, a local newspaper, showed that 78% of the public said that the pacifist constitution has helped to maintain peace in Japan. The survey contacted eligible voters by phone on 14-15 April and obtained responses from 1,807. Only 18% of the respondents said the Self-Defense Forces should be turned into a "self-defense military," showing a wide gap between public opinion and the direction of the revisions being pushed by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

This first step has already put South Korea and China, the main victims of Japan's aggressive colonialism in the 1900s, on alert. They see the constitutional revision as a serious threat to peace in East Asia. Xinhua, the official news agency in China said people had begun to doubt whether Japan would continue along the path of peaceful development. The official Korean Central News Agency lashed out in a commentary on 25 May 2007: "It is nothing but an imperialist law to turn Japan into a state for war and aggression".

Sources: Asahi Shimbun, Asia News, Radio & Television Hong Kong, Xinhua News

Nepal

First Bishop Ordained in Nepal

Jesuit Father, Anthony Francis Sharma, 69, was ordained as Nepal's first bishop on 5 May 2007 at Kathmandu's Assumption Church. The ceremony was officiated by the apostolic nuncio to India and Nepal and two coordinating bishops from India and attended by 3,000 people, including Hindus and Buddhists. The new bishop assured them of his commitment to building a new Nepal and to working for peace, prosperity and the collaboration of all the faithful.

According to one source, Msgr. Sharma, in his 40 years as priest, has committed himself to work to create a democratic and prosperous society and to encourage inter-faith cooperation. People testify that he is active in helping people in backward rural areas.

Msgr. Sharma has been named the first bishop since the status of the Catholic community in Nepal was changed from an apostolic prefecture to an apostolic vicariate on 10 February 2007—a step that precedes the creation of a diocese. He was born in Kathmandu in 1937, to a Hindu family, entered the Society of Jesus in 1956 and was ordained as the first ethnic Nepali Jesuit priest in 1968. He spent much of his life working and teaching in India and became the Ecclesiastical Superior of the Nepal Catholic Mission when he returned in 1984.

Hinduism was Nepal's official religion and converts from the faith were subject to criminal penalties, until an act of parliament in May 2006 declared Nepal a secular state. It was thus noted that the Church should now be able to overcome the fear of being accused of making use of schools and health centres for conversion purposes, and will be able to play a more important role in the struggle

against illiteracy and disease, especially in backward rural areas.

Nepal has a population of 28 million. Msgr. Sharma heads a community of about 6,972 Catholics. Its six parishes, 38 mission stations and 26 schools are served by 13 diocesan and 52 religious priests from 5 congregations. A total of 131 Catholic sisters, representing 17 congregations, live in 36 convents around the country and help run the Catholic institutions. The Catholic Church also runs a variety of day-care centres, schools and literary programs, as well as centres for the poor and disadvantaged. Caritas Nepal, the social arm of the local Church runs programs in 60 districts, works mainly through local NGOs and organizations, such as the Jesuit Refugee Service, with poor children and women as priority. Msgr. Sharma was the founding president of Caritas Nepal in 1989.

Sources: UCA News (www.ucanews.com), Catholic World News, Asia News, Catholic News Service, Sunday Examiner

Pakistan

Threats to Christian community at Charsadda

In early May 2007, Christians in Charsadda, a district in North West Frontier Province, have been threatened by an anonymous letter asking them to convert to Islam or relocate. This was followed by scores of barber and video CD shops being burnt down in two bomb blasts. There are around 600 Christians in the district who responded with fear and anger, but some had a desire to negotiate and calm things down. Despite the threats, none of them have left or converted.

Representatives of the All Pakistan Minorities Alliance (APMA), as well as leaders and representatives of Christian organizations, have since visited and condemned the threats and violence. A statement by Bishop Lawrence Saldanha, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference and Peter Jacob, the executive secretary of the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), called on the government to protect the life, safety, property and places of worship of its citizens, including religious minorities, as sanctioned in Pakistan's Constitution, and called for urgent measures to prevent the situation from degenerating into a massacre.

Bishop Lobo of the Catholic Diocese of Rawalpindi/Islamabad also issued a pastoral letter urging all to pray to the Holy Spirit in the midst of the threat and panic.

The local police provided more patrols on the streets and guards for churches, without finding the real culprit. They also reportedly tried to downplay the threats, but there is still fear of attacks among the Christians.

Local activists hope that more bishops and other Church leaders will come out with a strong ecumenical stand and make a clear statement of Christian's rights in the society. They should not be left to struggle in isolation and suffer at the hands of extremists.

Sources: Local sources, Asia News, Agenzia Fides, the Dawn, NCJP

Shadow Report on Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

In February, the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP) published a shadow report on the compliance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in Pakistan.

Endorsed by more than 60 NGOs in Pakistan, the report urged the Pakistani government to take more concrete steps with regards to laws and policy making for the equality of women in Pakistan. The civil society organizations further urged the government to ratify the Optional Protocol to CEDAW and to withdraw reservations made on becoming a party to the CEDAW.

In May 2007, NCJP lined up an advocacy programme in Washington, D.C. and New York. Apart from formal tripartite dialogue between the CEDAW Expert committee, NGOs and the government of Pakistan, NCJP conducted side meetings with local and international NGOs in the United States.

Sources: Pax Christi International, National Commission for Justice and Peace (Pakistan)

Philippines

Statement on Environment and Military Campaign

Another round in the war between government forces and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in Mindanao started since April 2007.

The conflict started when a unit of MNLF under the command of Habier Malik attacked a Marine base near Panamao, Sulu in retaliation for a military raid of an MNLF camp in Indanan in early April. The war has escalated to other nearby towns and provinces, resulting in the displacement of an estimated 70,000 people as of 19 April 2007.

In its statement issued in May, the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission-Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (JPICC-AMRSP) criticized the government's total disregard and non-implementation of the agreements reached by the 1996 peace talks, as well as its refusal to take seriously and schedule another Tripartite Meeting. Despite calls by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) for a ceasefire, the government and the military insisted on the military aggression.

JPICC-AMRSP reiterates that the conflict in Mindanao is an economic and political issue and cannot be solved by military action. The declaration of the military campaign against the MNLF by the government forces would only lead to more violence in the area. JPICC-AMRSP hence calls for an immediate cease to military operations in the area, as well as sustained and genuine implementation of the agreed provisions in the peace talks between the parties concerned.

Source: JPICC-AMRSP

Election Reflection Guide

In response to the elections held in May in the Philippines, the JPICC-AMRSP produced a reflection guide as a reference for discernment or reflection among the religious congregation/groups in the country.

This handy reflection guide features:

- an illustrated national situation for social analysis;
- a reflection on the state of the country;
- some guiding Christian principles in the exercise of suffrage; and
- a list of cause-oriented groups involved in the May elections.

While the Church clearly outlines that clergy and religious people cannot be directly involved in partisan politics, the JPICC-AMRSP encourages people to participate in the democratic process to help reclaim the positive values of political life.

The guideline is available in Filipino only. For copies, comments or suggestions, please email to the JPICC Secretariat at jpicc_amrsp@yahoo.com

Source: JPICC-AMRSP

South Korea

Struggle Against US Military Base Continues

Pyongtaek Jikilmis (or "defenders"), a group of activists who lived in Daechuri and Doduri for up to two years, left their homes on 9 April 2007 when the destruction of the villages was already underway. They started a Peace March from Daechuri to Seoul.

Along the way, they asserted the right of Daechuri and Doduri villagers to return to their land, and to demand an end to the planned base expansion in Pyongtaek. The activists held vigils every night in cities along their way. They talked to local people about the base expansion and gave out pea plant seeds from Daechuri gardens.

When they attempted to deliver a letter to President Roh at the Blue House (the presidential mansion) on 14 April 2007, they were stopped by riot police. As the insincere negotiation from the government prevented the activists from delivering the letter personally, they decided to post the letter instead. Activists shared their experience and played recorded voices of Daechuri villagers to express their concern.

Source: Pan-S Korea Commission against US base expansion in Pyongtaek

Issues of Concern/Events

PP40 Seminar on "Populorum Progressio: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow"

The Asian Center for the Progress of Peoples (ACPP) organized a seminar on "Populorum Progressio: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" on 18-19 May 2007 at St. Paul's House of Prayer, Sheung Shui, Hong Kong, as part of its Education and Formation on Catholic Social Teaching. It

also marked the 40th anniversary of Populorum Progressio (PP) - the papal encyclical which inspired many of the faithful to work for justice and peace, and which ACPP is named after.

The overnight seminar aimed to promote understanding of the spirit behind PP, its relevance to daily life, and raise consciousness to respond to the call of PP to social justice and development of all peoples.

Under the guidance of the resource person, Ms. Christine Tse, the 12 participants (staff of ACPP, the HK Catholic Commission for Labour Affairs, clergy from parishes and Diocesan Seminary in Hong Kong, and religious and lay members of Religious Congregations) went through the history and main message of PP, highlighting the challenges to the Church towards promoting justice and its prophetic role.

There were discussions and plenary activities to internalize the importance of integral human development at the personal level (through intellectual, physical and spiritual exercises) as well as the social level (economic, socio-cultural and political challenges faced by the society "yesterday and today".) Reflections on the implications, challenges and hope for "tomorrow" were shared in a speech by Fr. Peter Henriot (refer to FYI 07-01, issued by ACPP in March), followed by participants' sharing on their challenges, role and suggestions in promoting PP within Church activities and in the context of their work.

It was concluded that the call of PP for balanced holistic development is possible, although challenges exist. Exposure, education/formation and awareness of the need for coordination with others who play different roles in the socio-pastoral cycle are some important elements. The participants were encouraged to use ACPP's publications to keep themselves aware of injustices around the Asian region, and to help promote PP in their own context.

At the end of the seminar, all the participants were pleased about each other's full participation in all sessions. As only the main highlights of PP could be discussed within the short time, some participants expressed a desire to learn, reflect and discuss more about PP, as well as attempt to re-read the original document in a new perspective. ACPP hopes that this seminar, having introduced some awareness on the inspiration behind PP, would pave way for the participants to continuously learn and apply it in their personal and work lives, as well as lead to more discussions and reflection on PP in concrete social justice situations.

Source: ACPP

The Ninth Asia Human Rights Award & Women Human Rights Special Award

Presented by the Foundation for Human Rights in Asia, the Asia Human Rights Award aims to recognize meritorious services toward improving and solving human rights problems in Asia. The Women Human Rights Special Award is given to individuals or organizations who have contributed particularly to the human rights of women.

Nomination **deadline is 30 June 2007**. The winner will be awarded with 1,000,000 Japanese yen (US\$8,210). To obtain an application form, please email to fhra@vesta.ocn.ne.jp Other information can be obtained at <http://www.jca.apc.org/fhra/> (Japanese only).

Source: Foundation for Human Rights in Asia

Gwangju Asian Human Rights Folk School 2007

The International Cooperation Team of the "May 18 Memorial Foundation" is calling for applications to the Gwangju Asian Human Rights Folk School to be held on 2-16 September 2007 in South Korea. The school aims to contribute to the development of democracy and human rights throughout Asia.

Twenty-five successful applicants, working for human rights and peace organizations in Asia, will be selected and given an opportunity to learn and experience the history and development process of human rights and democracy in South Korea. Topics will include Korean history, movements and struggle for democracy, administration of cultural events and youth activities, building networks and conducting international cooperation projects.

For more information, please visit their English web site at <http://eng.518.org/english.html>. Interested parties are requested to download and fill in the application form in the web site and e-mail it to 518folkschool@gmail.com **on or before 20 July 2007**. The final list of selected participants will be announced in August 2007.

More information about the past folk schools can be found at their blog archive at www.518folkschool.blogspot.com

Source: The May 18 Memorial Foundation

ACPP's Workshop on "Justice and Peace Work"

ACPP will hold its regional training workshop on "Justice and Peace Work" in September in Bangkok. Topics will include Catholic Social Teaching, the Rights-Based Approach and some theories on conflict. As it co-incides with the 40th Anniversary of the Populorum Progressio (PP), it is hoped that the workshop will help participants respond more effectively to the "signs of the times" - a challenge made to the faithful in Catholic Social Teaching (CST), especially PP. The workshop also aims to explore how the topics and methodologies can enhance work for justice and peace, as well as re-emphasise that human rights advocacy is part of peace-building.

Source: ACPP

Justice and Peace Resources

Catechetical Aids in Mandarin

A vast selection of catechetical materials in Mandarin is available online through the Taipei Archdiocesan Catechetical Center (TACC) web site: www.zhuyesu.org

On this web site, you can find:

- 10 downloadable video courses on themes that include catechetical methods, prayer, family and individual

spirituality. New courses will be uploaded continuously.

- Over 150 lesson plans in harmony with the Catechism of the Catholic Church for adults, youth and children.
- A new set of 32 lessons for kindergarten-aged children.
- Activities such as religious crafts, faith games, projects for each feast of the Liturgical Year, religious sign-language songs and seasonal prayer services.
- Resources for fostering the spiritual life of individuals or the family.

Free registration for membership is required. You can download the teaching aids and enjoy other features offered by the site.

Sources: One Spirit, TACC

Resource on Climate Change for Earth Day

A report of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released on 6 April 2007 confirmed that the earth's climate and ecosystem is already being affected by the atmospheric buildup of smokestack and tailpipe gases that trap heat. Different species, water supplies, ice sheets are already responding to the climate change and vulnerable regions are going to face the challenges of shifting weather patterns and rising seas.

Another report released by the panel in February, states that, for the first time, it has concluded with 90 percent certainty that human actions have been the main cause of warming since 1950.

Climate change has always been one of the top prioritized issues that need urgent action. The JPICC-AMRSP has initiated a "Jubilee Call: Rest the Earth Campaign", concerning issues such as mining, logging, ecological solid waste management, water, genetically engineered organisms/modified organisms etc. In observance of International Earth Day, it has shared some documents for education and reference:

1. "Global Warming and Climate Change": This is a working paper of the Global Warming Working Group of the JPIC Promoters which gathered in Rome, Italy in 2002. It introduces the background and causes of global warming, analyses the issues from a religious perspective and suggests action that we could take. For the full paper, please download at: www.ofm-jpic.org/globalwarming
2. "100 tips for Conserving Water": Little changes in our daily lives can help to conserve the environment. With the deficiency of clean water in many parts of the world, this paper provides concrete suggestions on how we can make best use of our water resources. Please go to the following web site to learn more: <http://www.ci.tukwila.wa.us/pubwks/watertips.pdf>.

Source: JPICC-AMRSP

Catholic Teaching on Human Dignity

Human dignity originates from God and is of God because we are made in God's own image and likeness.

Human dignity is the foundation of morality and its principle is the foundation of all Catholic social teaching principles.

In "Human Dignity" issued by the Center of Concern, some historical developments that caused the Church to take notice and respond to the call for human dignity are highlighted. It names related encyclicals and what they have proposed in response to their contemporary situations. The document also cites paragraphs from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and selected quotes from Catholic social teaching that are related to human dignity.

The document further includes prayers and questions for reflection. It suggests that the teaching on human dignity could be closely related to our daily life as a principle for reflection, criteria for judgment, guideline for action and a tool for conscience formation.

For the full document, please contact ACPP at hotline@acpp.org

Source: Center of Concern

JPW Exchange Corner

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.

Update on East Asia Sub-regional Action Plan

One of the issues of concern and action plans discussed at the last JPW meeting (February 2005, Rawalpindi, Pakistan) was a Fact Finding Mission to Japan on the impact of the US military presence in the region, and support peace efforts in Japan and East Asia, such as protection of the "Peace Constitution" (Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution).

With the recent change in the Japanese government and its attempt to push for constitutional amendment through legislative means, the Japan Catholic Council for Justice and Peace (JCCJP) has further intensified its continued appeal to the JPW network to support their campaign that targets Constitution Day in Japan (3 May 2007).

In response, Pax Christi USA delivered to the Japanese Embassy a hundred letters, signed by faith leaders from various religious traditions, affirming Article 9, when Prime Minister Abe was in Washington D.C. They have also issued a solidarity message addressed to the JCCJP, a member of Pax Christi International, on Japan's Constitution Day. On their web site, Pax Christi USA continues to promote advocacy efforts by featuring "Save Article 9" on the homepage. The Leadership Conference of Women religious and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops were also supportive.

Earlier in April, ACPP also issued a Special Urgent Appeal [SUA070416(1)] to support JCCJP's effort by urging its network to pressure Japanese authorities to withdraw a bill which calls for an amendment to the Constitution.

The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (JPICC-AMRSP) has also showed support by urging its members from religious communities, as well as its international network, to support the campaign.

On 15 May, however, the law which allows for a referendum to seek an amendment to the Peace Constitution was approved after it passed in the Japanese Diet. JCCJP along with religious activists, backed by Christians and citizens' groups, have expressed their anger over the new law.

Bishop Goro Matsuura, chairperson of the Japan Catholic Council for Peace and Justice, warned that the new law would lower the hurdle required to change the constitution and should not be tolerated.

Sources: Pax Christi, ACPP

Update on the next JPW Meeting

The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) - Thailand has agreed to host the next JPW meeting in Bangkok. They have already started to make preparations for exposure visits which would be part of the program.

The JPW meeting is tentatively set for 19-23 November 2007, but it depends on fund-raising. If funds are not adequate by July, it will be postponed to January 2008. Final dates are expected to be announced not later than 31 July 2007.

As 2007 is the 40th Anniversary of the Populorum Progressio, the JPW meeting also hopes to incorporate an element of reflection and sharing on the progress and future challenges of the important encyclical, which has inspired many to work for justice and peace around the world.

As we are still in the process of raising funds to make the meeting possible, suggestions or contact details of potential supporters are welcome, as well as any financial contributions from individuals who may want to give support. For details please contact hotline@acpp.org - your message will be forwarded to the JPW 2007 Co-organizing Team.

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