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“IT’S TIME TO STOP THIS MADNESS” – PHILIPPINES PLEA AT UN CLIMATE TALKS

Philippines lead negotiator Yeb Sano addressed the opening session of the UN climate summit in Warsaw. This is an edited transcript of his speech.



Mr. President, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the resilient people of the Republic of the Philippines.

We thank all of you, friends and colleagues in this hall and from all corners of the world as you stand beside us in this difficult time. ... It was barely 11 months ago in Doha when my delegation appealed to the world, to open our eyes to the stark reality that we face as we confronted a catastrophic storm that resulted in the costliest disaster in Philippine history. Less than a year hence, we cannot imagine that a disaster much bigger would come.

With an apparent cruel twist of fate, my country is being tested by this hellstorm called Super Typhoon Haiyan, which has been described by experts as the strongest typhoon that has ever made landfall in the course of recorded human history... The initial assessment show that Haiyan left a wake of massive devastation that is unprecedented, unthinkable and horrific, affecting 2/3 of the Philippines, with about half a million people now rendered homeless, and with scenes reminiscent of the aftermath of a tsunami, with a vast wasteland of mud and debris and dead bodies...

To anyone who continues to deny the

reality that is climate change, I dare you to get off your ivory tower and away from the comfort of your armchair. I dare you to go to the islands of the Pacific, the islands of the Caribbean and the islands of the Indian ocean and see the impacts of rising sea levels; to the mountainous regions of the Himalayas and the Andes to see communities confronting glacial floods, to the Arctic where communities grapple with the fast dwindling polar ice caps, to the large deltas of the Mekong, the Ganges, the Amazon, and the Nile where lives and livelihoods are drowned, to the hills of Central America that confronts similar monstrous hurricanes, to the vast savannas of Africa where climate change has likewise become a matter of life and death as food and water becomes scarce. Not to forget the massive hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico and the eastern seaboard of North America. And if that is not enough, you may want to pay a visit to the Philippines right now.

The science has given us a picture that has become much more in focus. The IPCC report on climate change and extreme events underscored the risks associated with changes in the patterns as well as frequency of extreme weather events. Science tells us that simply, climate change will mean more intense tropical storms. As the Earth warms up, that would include the oceans. The energy that is stored in the waters off the Philippines will increase the intensity of typhoons and the trend we now see is that more destructive storms will be the new norm. This will have profound implications

on many of our communities, especially those who struggle against the twin challenges of the development crisis and the climate change crisis. Typhoons such as Haiyan and its impacts represent a sobering reminder to the international community that we cannot afford to procrastinate on climate action. Warsaw should muster the political will to address climate change.

In Doha, we asked “If not us then who? If not now, then when? If not here, then where?” (borrowed from Philippine student leader Ditto Sarmiento during Martial Law). It may have fallen on deaf ears. But here in Warsaw, we ask these same forthright questions. “If not us, then who? If not now, then when? If not here in Warsaw, where?”

What my country is going through as a result of this extreme climate event is madness. The climate crisis is madness. We can stop this madness.

It is the 19th COP, but we might as well stop counting, because my

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DISARMING TIMES

A quarterly journal of Pax Christi Australia. It aims to provide members and interested peacemakers with peace news and views both local and international. We endeavour in each edition to reflect the three-fold emphasis of Pax Christi which engages members in study, Non-violent action and prayer for peace, justice, human rights, development and inter-faith and inter-civilisation dialogue.

PAX CHRISTI AUSTRALIA

is an Australia-wide

Christian Peace Movement, affiliated with Pax Christi International.

Human rights, justice and integrity of creation are central to its work.

We take a stand against militarism, nuclear weapons and the arms race.

As an ecumenical Christian movement

Pax Christi fosters the spiritual and scriptural dimensions of peace-making.

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country refuses to accept that a COP30 or a COP40 will be needed to solve climate change. And because it seems that despite the significant gains we have had since the UNFCCC was born, 20 years hence we continue to fail in fulfilling the ultimate objective of the Convention. Now, we find ourselves in a situation where we have to ask ourselves – can we ever attain the objective set out in Article 2 – which is to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system? By failing to meet the objective the Convention, we may have ratified the doom of vulnerable countries

And if we have failed to meet the objective of the Convention, we have to confront the issue of loss and damage which is a reality today across the world. Developed country emissions reductions targets are dangerously low and must be raised immediately, but even if they were in line with the demand of reducing 40-50% below 1990 levels, we would still have locked-in climate change and would still need to address the issue of loss and damage.

We find ourselves at a critical juncture and the situation is such that even the most ambitious emissions reductions by developed countries, will not be enough to avert the crisis. It is now too late to talk about the world being able to rely on Annex I countries to solve the climate crisis. We have entered a new era that demands global solidarity in order to fight climate change and ensure that pursuit of sustainable human development remains at the fore of the global community's efforts. This is why means of implementation for developing countries is ever more crucial.

It was the Secretary General of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro, 1992, Maurice Strong who said that "History reminds us that what is not possible today, may be inevitable tomorrow."

We cannot sit and stay helpless

staring at this international climate stalemate. It is now time to take action. We need an emergency climate pathway....

We can take drastic action now to ensure that we prevent a future where super typhoons are a way of life. We refuse, as a nation, to accept a future where super typhoons like Haiyan become a fact of life. We refuse to accept that running away from storms, evacuating our families, suffering the devastation and misery, having to count our dead, become a way of life.

We must stop calling events like these as natural disasters. It is not natural when people who continue to struggle to eradicate poverty and pursue development, are battered by a monster storm now considered as the strongest ever to hit land. It is not natural when science already tells us that global warming will induce more intense storms. It is not natural when the human species has already profoundly changed the climate.

Disasters are never natural. They are the intersection of factors other than physical. They are the accumulation of the constant breach of economic, social, and environmental thresholds. Most of the time disasters are a result of inequity. The poorest people of the world are at greatest risk because of their vulnerability and decades of maldevelopment, which I must assert is connected to the kind of pursuit of economic growth that dominates the world; the same kind of pursuit of so-called economic growth and unsustainable consumption that has altered the climate system.

Now, if you will allow me, to speak on a more personal note.

Super Typhoon Haiyan made landfall in my family's hometown and the devastation is staggering. I struggle to find words even for the images that we see from the news coverage. I struggle to find words to describe how I feel about the losses and damages we have suffered from this cataclysm. *Contd on p 3*

Philippines Plea contd.

Up to this hour, I agonize while waiting for word as to the fate of my own relatives. What gives me renewed strength and great relief was when my brother succeeded in communicating with us that he has survived the onslaught. In the last two days, he has been gathering bodies of the dead with his own hands. He is hungry and weary as food supplies find it difficult to arrive.

We call on this COP to pursue work until the most meaningful outcome is in sight, until concrete pledges have been made to ensure mobiliza-

tion of resources

We call on this COP to pursue work until the most meaningful outcome is in sight, until concrete pledges have been made to ensure mobilization of resources for the Green Climate Fund. Until the promise of the establishment of a loss and damage mechanism has been fulfilled; until there is assurance on finance for adaptation; until concrete pathways for reaching the committed 100 billion dollars have been made; until we see real ambition on stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations. We must put the money where our mouths are.

This process under the UNFCCC has been called many names. It has been called a farce. It has been called an annual carbon-intensive gathering of useless frequent flyers. It has been called many names. But it has also been called the Project to save the planet. It has been called "saving tomorrow today". We can fix this. We can stop this madness. Right now, right here, in the middle of this football field.

I call on you to lead us. And let Poland be forever known as the place we truly cared to stop this madness. Can humanity rise to the occasion? I still believe we can.

UNRAVELLING THE ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS ACT (NT) OF 1976

Rita Camilleri

The Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 was the first attempt by an Australian government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, to legally recognise the Aboriginal system of land ownership and put into law the concept of inalienable freehold title. The Land Rights Act was a fundamental piece of social reform. Its intention was to give Aboriginal people ownership of the land – forever. Land Councils were to ensure the First Nation's rights to consultation and informed consent.

The present government, led by Tony Abbott, is proposing to negotiate 99 year leases with the traditional owners of the land. Although no official reason has been given, under the proposed arrangement the community would get an upfront payment to build businesses as stipulated by the traditional owners. An independent commonwealth statutory office would provide the executive director of township leasing. Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM has been visiting townships in East Arnhem Land, home of the Yolngu people. In a letter to the *Australian* he has reported that although the government and the Northern Land Council (whose area covers the northern half of the Northern Ter-

ritory), have decided that 99 year leases are the way forward. The land-owning stake-holder groups and community members do not support this position.

Currently, many communities have their own business plans. Aboriginal corporations have leased blocks of land in the townships belonging to all, and are in the process of developing them. Dr Djiniyini says that 'to replace [this] with a bureaucratic government body . . . will relegate indigenous people to fringe-dwellers on their own lands.' He wants the 'shameful march of colonisation' to end.

At a recent meeting called by the group *concerned Australians*, we heard that Aboriginal needs are determined by the Public Service, whose representatives lack any cultural awareness and who merely continue with the policies of their predecessors. The (Aboriginal) people are unaware of what they may be signing away, and for what purpose. Nor are they offered any resources which enable them to be fully informed, needless to say they are not included in any consultative process. It seems that Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion flies in and flies out, expecting them to give their consent to something which may have an adverse impact on their rights. Clearly, ade-

quate timeframes for decision-making processes and cultural protocols are absolutely essential.

Senator Scullion was a member of a parliamentary committee which endorsed consultation recommendations proposed by the Australian Human Rights Commission aimed at consensus decision-making. The government's actions are inconsistent with these recommendations. They are also at odds with the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which Australia has endorsed.

Towards the closing of the meeting the First Nation people who were present, among them Rosalie Kunoth-Monks OAM, an elder from Utopia in the Northern Territory, were encouraged (by Malcolm Fraser) to ignore Canberra and approach philanthropist organisations, and to engage sympathetic lawyers – and developers - in order to establish profitable enterprises over which they have at least joint control.

This outline is based on the meeting 'Dismantling of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (NT)' November 27, 2013, prepared by 'concerned Australians' and the Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra.

Rita Camilleri is Secretary of Christi Victoria

POPE FRANCIS DENOUNCES UNFETTERED CAPITALISM AS "A NEW TYRANNY"



Pope Francis has issued a Pastoral Exhortation (26 Nov 2013) which amounts to a far-reaching platform of his papacy. Here we reproduce a few excerpts in which the Pope offers a damning assessment of the neo-liberal economic ideology which has come to dominate current attitudes and policies. In the next issue of Disarming Times, we will publish a detailed analysis of this remarkable document.

No to the new idolatry of money

55. One cause of this situation is found in our relationship with money, since we calmly accept its dominion over ourselves and our societies. The current financial crisis can make us overlook the fact that it originated in a profound human crisis: the denial of the primacy of the human person! We have created new idols. The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. *Ex 32:1-35*) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose. The worldwide crisis affecting finance and the economy lays bare their imbalances and, above all, their lack of real concern for human beings; man is reduced to one of his needs alone: consumption.
56. While the earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few. This imbalance is the result of ideologies which defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation. Consequently, they reject the right of states, charged with vigilance for the common good, to exercise any form of control. A new tyranny is thus born, invisible and often virtual, which unilaterally and relentlessly imposes its own laws and rules. Debt and the accumulation of interest also make it difficult for countries to realize the potential of their own economies and keep citizens from enjoying their real purchasing power. To all this we can add widespread corruption and self-serving tax evasion, which have taken on worldwide dimensions. The thirst for power and possessions knows no limits. In this system, which tends to devour everything which stands in the way of increased profits, whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenceless before the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule.

No to a financial system which rules rather than serves

57. Behind this attitude lurks a rejection of ethics and a rejection of God. Ethics has come to be viewed with a certain scornful derision. It is seen as counterproductive, too human, because it makes money and power relative. It is felt to be a threat, since it condemns the manipulation and debasement of the person. In effect, ethics leads to a God who calls for a committed response which is outside the categories of the marketplace. When these latter are absolutised, God can only be seen as uncontrollable, unmanageable, even dangerous, since he calls human beings to their full realization and to freedom from all forms of enslavement. Ethics – a non-ideological ethics – would make it possible to bring about balance and a more humane social order. With this in mind, I encourage financial experts and political leaders to ponder the words of one of the sages of antiquity: “Not to share one’s wealth with the poor is to steal from them and to take away their livelihood. It is not our own goods which we hold, but theirs”.
58. A financial reform open to such ethical considerations would require a vigorous change of approach on the part of political leaders. I urge them to face this challenge with determination and an eye to the future, while not ignoring, of course, the specifics of each case. Money must serve, not rule! The Pope loves everyone, rich and poor alike, but he is obliged in the name of Christ to remind all that the rich must help, respect and promote the poor. I exhort you to generous solidarity and to the return of economics and finance to an ethical approach which favours human beings.

No to the inequality which spawns violence

59. Today in many places we hear a call for greater security. But until exclusion and inequality in society and between peoples are reversed, it will be impossible to eliminate violence. The poor and the poorer peoples are accused of violence, yet without equal opportunities the different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and eventually explode. When a society – whether local, national or global – is willing to leave a part of itself on the fringes, no political programmes or resources spent on law enforcement or surveillance systems can indefinitely guarantee tranquillity. This is not the case simply because inequality provokes a violent reaction from those excluded from the system, but because the socioeconomic system is unjust at its root. Just as goodness tends to spread, the toleration of evil, which is injustice, tends to expand its baneful influence and quietly to undermine any political and social system, no matter how solid it may appear. If every action has its consequences, an evil embedded in the structures of a society has a constant potential for disintegration and death. It is evil crystallized in unjust social structures, which cannot be the basis of hope for a better future. We are far from the so-called “end of history”, since the conditions for a sustainable and peaceful development have not yet been adequately articulated and realized.
60. Today’s economic mechanisms promote inordinate consumption, yet it is evident that unbridled consumerism combined with inequality proves doubly damaging to the social fabric. Inequality eventually engenders a violence which recourse to arms cannot and never will be able to resolve. It serves only to offer false hopes to those clamouring for

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Wes teaches theology and scripture at Seattle University. Wes and his wife, Sue Ferguson Johnson, collaborate in Abide in Me Ministries, that interweaves the mystical and the prophetic, the inner and outer journeys with God. They visited Australia in 2013 at the invitation of Pace e Bene. This is a summary of a session they led for Pax Christi Victoria

While preparing for our recently completed Australia summer teaching and speaking tour, we were invited to help Pax Christi reflect on what it means to be “Australian.” Rather than address the question directly, however, we chose to speak to what we hear as Jesus’ deeper and more intimate invitation: to become “children of God.”

Throughout biblical history, the people of YHWH argued among themselves over similar questions. What does it mean to be the “people of YHWH”? The texts—both those that made the canonical cut and those omitted, such as *1 Enoch*—line up at various places on a spectrum. At one end are texts that proclaim what I call the “religion of empire.” In this perspective, YHWH empowers a royal elite to rule on YHWH’s behalf. The religion of empire justifies the use of violence to exclude any who it defines as “outside” on whatever basis: ethnicity, worship forms and places, economic or social status, and so forth. It sees life as a competition amid scarcity in which the strong survive. It views strangers and other outsiders with suspicion. We find this perspective in texts such as the books of Joshua, 1-2 Kings, and Ezra-Nehemiah.

On the other hand, there is the “religion of creation.” Here, YHWH empowers all people, envisioned as created in the image and likeness of God, to be part of a covenanted community. It rejects human hierarchy and violence, seeking instead to embody a social order in which all are welcome. It experiences life as abundant and made for sharing among all God’s creation. We find

this “religion” in books such as Genesis, Exodus and the prophets. But most especially, we find the religion of creation in the message and life of Jesus.

Let’s take one familiar story as an example: Jesus’ encounter with a woman at a well in Samaria (John 4.3-42). Reading this story on its surface can lead one to wonder what is going on. The topic seems to shift in rapid sequence, as Jesus and the woman talk about water, ancestors, husbands, mountains, and messiahs, while Jesus and the disciples’ intervening dialogue is about food, harvest and labor. What is going on? Failure to dig more deeply into the story’s background context can leave one with a loose and generic metaphor as the seeming point of the text: what are you thirsting for?

But the author of John’s gospel, like all other biblical authors, uses words carefully and precisely, often carrying multiple meanings and always echoing earlier elements of the biblical stories. There is one, sure-fire way to make sense of this apparently chaotic sequence: to consider the history of Samaritans and “Judeans.”

Most modern English translations render the common-in-John Greek word, *Ioudaioi*, as “Jews.” This is both anachronistic and tone deaf to the central theme of the Gospel. First, the word “Jew” as we think of it today has no application in the ancient world. The title by which YHWH’s people referred to themselves was “Israelites.” The sometimes interchangeable (to us) “Hebrews” was an ethnic slur word, meaning something like “crosser,” akin to the Australian sense of

“asylum seeker” but with a pejorative connotation. *Ioudaioi* were not “Jews,” but “Judeans,” i.e., people of the southern region of Judea, with its capital in Jerusalem. John’s gospel takes this ordinary meaning and, associates it not simply with people residing in a geographic region, but with people who are ideologically defensive of Jerusalem and the temple system that keeps the local economy going. They are not simply the temple elite (chief priests and scribes) but *all* who rely on the notion that YHWH lives in Jerusalem and requires people to come there for worship.

Samaritans, on the other hand, were those people whose home was in the former northern region of “Israel.” During the monarchy, Israel’s royal capital was the city of Samaria. Later, this came to be the designation—at least according to the Judeans—for those people of the north who had become intermarried with various other peoples (See, e.g., 2 Kings 17.24-41). After the Babylonian Exile, the former Israelites, now “Samaritans,” sought to be part of the temple rebuilding plan. However, their offer was rebuffed by the elite who were empowered by the Persians to be the Persians’ local puppets. This story is told in the book of Ezra, where the Samaritans are called “the enemies of Judah and Benjamin” (Ezra 4). Thus, for nearly nine hundred years, there had been division between Israel and Judah. Each group developed its own traditions about YHWH, and its own strong sense of hostility toward the other. It was to reconcile this ancient animosity that our Gospel tells us it

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heightened security, even though nowadays we know that weapons and violence, rather than providing solutions, create new and more serious conflicts. Some simply content themselves with blaming the poor and the poorer countries themselves for their troubles; indulging in unwarranted generalizations, they claim that the solution is an “education” that would tranquilize them, making them tame and harmless. All this becomes even more exasperating for the marginalized in the light of the widespread and deeply rooted corruption found in many countries – in their governments, businesses and institutions – whatever the political ideology of their leaders

was “necessary for Jesus to go through Samaria” (John 4.3).

What is at stake in this story is the very nature of God and what it means to be God’s people. Is God the YHWH of the “religion of empire,” where boundaries between “us” and “them” are carefully defined and rigidly enforced? Or is God the YHWH of the “religion of creation,” where we are all one human family under God’s loving rule?

It is in this context that Jesus asks the Samaritan woman for a drink and then offers her the gift of “living water.” In response, she immediately brings up the core issue: “Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” Jacob, of course, was “Mr. Israel” himself (see Genesis 32.28), the source of all the eventual tribal ancestors. The woman is in essence saying, “Listen, Mr. Judean: you’re standing at *Jacob’s* well. Who do you think you are?”

The image of “living water” both expresses the sense of *flowing* water (as opposed to the standing well water) and of the deeper reality of a God who, like water, neither knows nor respects human-made boundaries. It also carries scriptural echoes, such as from the prophet Jeremiah’s scathing critique of the pre-exilic Jerusalem leadership:

Be appalled, O heavens, at this, be shocked, be utterly desolate, says YHWH, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that can hold no water. (Jer 2.12-13)

Jesus invites the woman to journey with him into the implications of this central metaphor. He invites her to call her “man,” and when she announces that she has no man, he proclaims the deeper truth: “You are right in saying, ‘I have no man, for you have had five men, and the one you have now is not your man.’” This often leads readers to denigrate the Samaritan woman as an adulteress or worse. However, this interpretation reveals more about the

sexist presuppositions of readers than the meaning of the Gospel story. For instance, what man would want to marry a woman who had such a reputation? Or if we imagine her as multiply widowed, what man would want to take such a “dangerous” woman as his wife?

Instead, Jesus’ new metaphor calls us again to the history of Samaritans and Judeans. The Jerusalem-centred narrative of 2 Kings 17 tells us that when the Assyrian Empire conquered Israel in the 8th century BCE, they brought in peoples from *five* nations to intermarry with the Israelites in order to dilute their sense of national identity and thus stave off rebellion against Assyria. As the later historian Josephus says—writing just decades before John’s gospel was composed—while the former Israelites did intermarry with these foreigners, they have not done so with the *Romans*. In other words, as Jesus says, “the man you have now is not your man” The story is not about one anonymous woman, but about the *Samaritans as a people*, with this woman as their representative. Once we perceive that this is the author’s perspective, all the pieces fit into place. Immediately, the conversation turns to the central issue that divided Samaritans and Judeans across the past six hundred years: where is the “correct” place to worship YHWH: in Jerusalem as the Judeans say or “here” on “this mountain” (Mt. Gerazim) as “we” Samaritans say?

Jesus’ response offers a third option. Correct worship of God is not based on the “right” place or form, but rather, is found “in spirit and in truth” (4.23). This eventually leads the woman back to the city to invite her compatriots back to the well to meet the man who might be the messiah. When they do, they welcome Jesus to stay with them. This, of course, was an unheard of act: for Samaritans to welcome someone they perceive to be a “Judean” (see Luke 9.52-53). But in doing so, they discover for themselves who Jesus is and what truly is the living water he offers. They declare him “saviour of the world,” a title found nowhere else in the Bi-

ble, but well-known to the late first-century audience as a title for the Roman emperor himself. That is, it is the Way of Jesus (the religion of creation) and not the way of Caesar (the religion of empire), that truly “saves” the world.” It is the breaking down of boundaries between peoples rather than the violence enforcement of such boundaries that provides true peace and “salvation.”

What does this story teach us about our own identities as “Australian” or “USAmerican”? It invites us into a deeper solidarity with those whom our national identities have excluded, such as Aboriginals or asylum seekers. It calls us not to invite “them” to be “Australian,” but for us to find a common identity in our shared origin in the one, Creator God of us all.

In order to bring this about in his time, Jesus in effect “married” the Samaritans. The shape of the story in John 4 follows the pattern of the “well courtship” story, where, most centrally, Jacob—Mr. Israel—found his wife, Rachel (Genesis 29; see also Gen 24). Jesus, of course, did not literally “marry” the Samaritan woman. But in the symbolism of John’s gospel, he *wedded himself to them as a people*, so much so, that later, when the Judeans accuse him of being a Samaritan, he does not deny it (John 8.48-49). In other words, he does not call the oppressed outsiders to give up their own identity to become part of the dominant culture, but identifies himself as a member of the oppressed culture itself.

While on our Australian tour, we met many wonderful people who were sincerely seeking to follow Jesus and to forge an identity beyond imperially-imposed nationalities such as “Australian” or “USAmerican.” Many have spent time in Aboriginal communities or with asylum seekers, seeking humbly to learn from “the other.” Pax Christi has an opportunity to continue to contribute to this journey out of empire and into our truest, deepest identity as children of the Creator God. May we all make that sacred journey, one faithful step at a time.

Responding to the ongoing violence in Syria and the great suffering of the Syrian people, Pax Christi International appeals for full humanitarian access in the country and pleads for strong international support for Geneva 2 negotiations based on a framework that ensures justice.

Starvation cannot be used as a weapon

In addition to 2.2 million refugees, most of whom are in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq, more than 5 million Syrians are displaced internally. Many have been displaced multiple times and are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. The military siege of areas, such as the Ghouta region, denies civilians in those regions access to food, water and health care. In this increasingly dire situation, humanitarian agencies must have unfettered access to populations in need.

Pax Christi International joins the United Nations, International Red Cross and Red Crescent organizations, and countless civil society organisations and faith-based institutions in calling for the full cooperation of the Syrian government and all actors involved in the civil war in opening cross-border and internal access for aid providers to all in need of assistance.

Starvation must never be used as a weapon. Russia and Iran, as allies of the Syrian government, and Arab and Western countries, supporting the Syrian opposition, should use their full diplomatic and political capacity to pressure the parties in Syria to respect the Geneva Convention¹ and refrain from using starvation as a weapon.

From border protection to protection of people

Further, Pax Christi International urges international donors to honour and even increase their commitments of foreign aid for countries in the region hosting millions of Syrian refugees.

In particular, Pax Christi Interna-

tional is greatly concerned over reports² of some European Union countries placing barriers to entry or forcibly returning asylum-seekers including people who have fled the conflict in Syria.

Pax Christi International is calling, globally as well as in the European Union, for a shift away from border protection to protection of people guaranteeing refugee status to Syrians fleeing the country. By placing barriers of any kind to them, those Syrians may undertake more dangerous crossings and further place them at the mercy of smugglers. The responsibility to shelter Syrian refugees cannot be left only to the neighbouring countries that lack the capacity and means.

Towards Geneva 2, arms embargo and a ceasefire

Pax Christi International welcomes the statement made by Ban Ki Moon – UN Secretary General, on 25 November 2013, announcing that the Geneva 2 peace conference will be convened on 22 January 2014.

Pax Christi International believes that a negotiated political solution to the conflict in Syria is essential and urges the government of Syria and a broadly representative delegation from the Syrian opposition to move swiftly and with good will into that process.

The international community, primarily through the United Nations, should provide the necessary infrastructure, mediation and a timetable to facilitate such a process, but Syrians themselves should be the main actors. Syrian civil society actors committed to nonviolence and women in particular should be consulted prior to the negotiations. Civil society needs also to be consulted during the talks and should monitor the implementation of agreements.

A ceasefire and humanitarian access to the besieged areas will be an essential first item on the Geneva 2 agenda if one is not agreed

before the negotiations begin.

A second conference on security cooperation and other critical issues in the region, including the creation of a Middle East weapons of mass destruction free zone³, follow Geneva 2 and should involve all nations affected by the Syrian conflict.

In the meantime, external actors such as the United States, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and many other countries should prioritise peace over their own geopolitical agendas; avoid fueling the further escalation of the conflict; stop supplying weapons to the Syrian government or any other armed actor; support civil society organizations committed to peace; and vigorously back a political solution.

Pax Christi International fully endorses the call of Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, for implementation of a UN arms embargo. Such an embargo should cut supply lines to warring parties in Syria as a step to prevent further war crimes and to avoid pre-empting the outcome of the negotiations.

The Syrian people will have to choose their own future. It is not up to the international community to impose one.

Honouring ethnic and religious diversity, accountability for war crimes, trust-building.

Pax Christi International further believes that the route to peace in Syria will require construction of a sustainable and inclusive political framework that upholds the rights and honours the diversity of all Syrians, regardless of ethnic or religious background or gender, and a just process to ascertain accountability for war crimes or crimes against humanity committed by any party to the conflict. In order to facilitate a process of post-war transitional justice, preparatory investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity should be conducted by the

Criminal Court or other appropriate legal institutions.

The international community also should be prepared to cooperate with the Syrian people in support of a vigorous peace-building agenda. Trust-building processes should begin soon on at least a small scale and on a larger scale in the longer term.

Advocate for a political solution and pray for peace in Syria

Pax Christi International calls its Member Organisations and all people of good will worldwide to:

- share this statement with their own national authorities and ambassadors from countries involved in the Syrian conflict, urging them to actively support the Geneva 2 talks;
- support the efforts of Caritas

International, Jesuit Refugee Services and other humanitarian organizations to provide urgent relief to the Syrian people;

- initiate public prayer services for peace in Syria and express solidarity with the people of Syria. The coming World Day of Peace⁴ of 1 January 2014 can be a moment for further reflection and prayers for peace in Syria.

Brussels, 26 November 2013

OUR POLITICIANS HAVE FAILED YET AGAIN – IT'S TIME WE FIXED THE MESS WITH INDONESIA

Joseph Camilleri

Every so often over the last 50 years, Australia's relations with Indonesia have hit stormy waters. The present tensions over the spying scandal may not be the most serious, but they are serious enough. Much Australian commentary on this latest unfortunate episode has been typically shallow.

Australia must develop a stable, close and mutually respectful relationship with Indonesia, its government, its leaders, and its people. Every so often over the last 50 years, Australia's relations with Indonesia have hit stormy waters. The present tensions over the spying scandal may not be the most serious, but they are serious enough.

Much Australian commentary on this latest unfortunate episode has been typically shallow – itself a symptom of the underlying problem. Much has been said about the personalities involved, the implications for the government's "stop the boats" policy, and the psychological impact of the release of the Snowden documents. But with a few notable exceptions, the most critical questions have been largely overlooked.

No doubt eavesdropping on foreign leaders - a questionable practice at the best of times - has been found wanting both in this specific case and in the many other cases involving the United States wiretapping operations. A thorough review of such operations is well overdue.

However, the most pressing question raised by the spying fiasco is whether or not Australia is ready and able to develop a stable, close mutually respectful relationship



with Indonesia, its government, its leaders, and its people. How we answer this question will help determine how we negotiate the so-called Asian Century, The key here, as we shall see, is cultural and political literacy.

Prime minister Paul Keating recognised the importance of working closely with Indonesia. No country is more important to Australia than Indonesia.

Twenty years later this remains a distant aspiration. Prime minister Tony Abbott, who glibly promised "more Jakarta, less Geneva", now finds his government's policies on Indonesia floundering barely two months into his prime ministership. The tensions created by the spying episode are not simply of Abbott's making. The previous Rudd and Gillard governments share a good deal of the responsibility – either they themselves authorised Australian spies to eavesdrop Indonesia's most senior leaders on, or they failed to apply adequate monitoring and accountability procedures. La-

bor's lame response to the events of the last week suggests they may be culpable on both counts .

This said, the Abbott government's handling of the Indonesian relationship has been unusually clumsy and short-sighted.

Even before coming to office, the Coalition made it clear that stopping the boats was critical to protecting Australian sovereignty. Abbott and immigration minister Scott Morrison were adamant that the boats would be turned back to Indonesia, even though Indonesian leaders repeatedly said that such a step would violate their country's sovereignty.

The clear inference of the Abbott strategy was that Australian sovereignty was somehow superior to Indonesian sovereignty, and that, if necessary, Australia would act alone.

This barely disguised cultural and moral arrogance was then reinforced by the way Abbott handled the spying row – not just refusing to apologise but claiming that all countries were engaged in such conduct – a patently false claim. Most governments don't eavesdrop on the conversations of foreign leaders.

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To add insult to injury Abbott went on to insinuate that Indonesian leaders should be grateful to find themselves spied upon, because all of this was being done with their interests at heart. Australia, it seems, knew what was in Indonesia's interests better than Indonesians did. This profound cultural insensitivity was compounded by media comment (shared by a number of politicians) that Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's verbal response and his decision to downgrade military cooperation could somehow be discounted, because he was merely playing to his domestic gallery.

The Rudd and Gillard governments share a good deal of responsibility for Australian spies eavesdropping on Indonesian leaders.

Such an interpretation can mean only one of two things: either the Indonesian president lacked sincerity in expressing his displeasure; or that popular anger within Indonesia was not in reality shared by the president, and could therefore be discounted. It is as if we were telling Indonesians it didn't matter what they thought so long as we had the president on side. Not exactly how to win friends and influence people.

Where to from here? The relatively simple first step must be to offer Indonesia an unreserved apology and clear assurance that such spying will stop. But other more demanding steps will need to follow.

For too long, Liberal and Labor governments have approached our ties with Indonesia in a purely instrumental fashion. The relationship is viewed as valuable insofar as it can serve Australia's immediate interests: access to Indonesia's expanding market, support for counter-terrorism strategies and cooperation on people smuggling.

Australian economic aid thus becomes the price we have to pay for Indonesian compliance with Australian priorities. Likewise with military aid and support for Indonesia's territorial integrity (including

turning a blind eye to human rights violations in West Papua). We do these things largely because they make it more likely that Indonesia will accede to our requests and reduce the risk of any future Indonesian threat to Australia's security.

It is time for Australia to adopt a different approach – one in which self-interest plays, and is seen to play, a less prominent role. We need to cultivate a deeper understanding of our neighbour's interests, attitudes and perceptions, and a willingness to give them due attention.

What might this mean in practice? First and foremost, a drastic improvement in the presently abysmal level of Indonesia literacy in this country. Complementing the study of Indonesian – which has been languishing for years in our schools and universities – must be greater knowledge of Indonesian society, its history, its culture, its values, and above all its ancient and still living wisdom.

Australia and Indonesia are strategically placed to act collaboratively on a range of important regional issues.

To this end, a ten-year nationwide strategy is needed, integrating all key stakeholders: educational institutions, federal and state governments, parliaments, the media, business and the professions.

Australia must also seek – as a matter of high priority – Indonesia's advice and support in responding to the emerging regional and global challenges facing our region. To this end, we must embark on a far-reaching dialogue that engages the two societies, not just the two governments.

A time must come, sooner rather than later, when Australian political leaders are in the habit of consulting with Jakarta as intensively as with Washington before determining Australian policy on such difficult international issues as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iran, Afghanistan, as well as global financial regulation, nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

ment.

In the meantime, Australia and Indonesia are strategically placed to act collaboratively on a range of important regional issues, notably maritime tensions in the South China Sea and the rapid and potentially destabilising arms build up in southeast Asia.

The two countries are, of course, well-placed to exercise joint leadership in pressing for a regional solution to the protracted asylum seeker and refugee crisis based on firm and interlocking commitments for asylum, resettlement and repatriation.

Indonesia and Australia could greatly benefit from sharing their experiences as highly diverse, multicultural societies, and from developing the Asia-South Pacific profile of the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC). Under UNAOC auspices, a range of joint projects could be devised involving extensive state and civil society cooperation. The forthcoming sixth UNAOC global forum to be held in Bali in August 2014 offers an important signpost for future bilateral and regional collaboration.

Australians have to negotiate an uncertain future in which US power and influence will steadily decline. In the emerging multi-centric world, different centres of power and influence reflecting different histories and worldviews will have to learn to co-exist and co-operate. A creative, culturally sensitive, long-term approach to our relations with Indonesia may be an indispensable asset as we navigate through turbulent waters of change.

Professor Joseph Camilleri is professor of international relations at Latrobe University, and founding President of Pax Christi Australia

'When a man has done what he considers to be his duty to his people and his country, he can rest in peace. I believe I have made that effort and that is, therefore, why I will sleep for the eternity.' **Nelson Mandela**

Tis the season for remembering the assassination of President John F Kennedy which took place in Dallas Texas on 24 November 1963, just fifty years ago. This anniversary has provoked numerous articles and TV documentaries claiming to get to the bottom of "who killed JFK." Conspiracy theories abound. It is with some diffidence, therefore, that I introduce what I believe to be an important book about JFK's assassination.

The author, James W Douglass is neither a journalist nor a populist historian. He is a noted author on non violence and Catholic theology, with many books and essays to his credit. Douglass was a professor of religion at the University of Hawaii who first engaged in Civil Disobedience to protest against the Vietnam War. In 1975 Jim and Shelley Douglass founded Ground Zero Centre for Nonviolent Action to protest against the construction of a Trident Missile nuclear submarine base the state of Washington. Their goal was to "seek the truth of a nonviolent way of life," both personally and politically. The Douglass's later moved to Birmingham, Alabama, to establish Mary's House, a "House of Hospitality" for homeless or indigent people in need of long-term health care. In 2003 Douglass joined a Christian Peacemaker Team in Iraq and stayed with civilians during the US led invasion *JFK and the Unspeakable*, explores the JFK assassination as a conspiracy ordered by unknown parties and carried out by the CIA with help from the Mafia and elements in the FBI to put an end to Kennedy's effort to end the Cold War after the Cuban Missile Crisis.

At the outset I want to make three points about the book. First it is meticulously researched. There are one hundred pages of references and footnotes for three hundred and ninety two pages of text. Secondly it is set in the context of the na-

tional and international politics of the Cold War. Thirdly, this is a theological book with a spiritual purpose. The author draws on the spirituality of Thomas Merton the Trappist monk who wrote widely of the dangers of nuclear war. He believed that such powerful weapons took on a life of their own to set a war agenda for those who possessed them. Merton coined the term "The Unspeakable" a kind of systemic evil which defies speech. He describes a void: "*that contradicts everything that is spoken even before the words are said; the void that gets into the language of public and official declaration at the very moment they are pronounced, and makes them ring dead with the hollowness of the abyss.*" For Douglass the Unspeakable was the doctrine of "plausible deniability" by which the CIA and other security agencies were released from accountability. It enabled covert crimes to protect US nuclear weapons primacy. It made possible the JFK assassination and cover up.

With this in mind, he examines in detail the events of Kennedy's presidency which led up to his assassination. First, he looks briefly at Kennedy's early life. In his youth Kennedy had frequent struggles with illness. During his war service in the US Navy, he came very close to death when the ship he was on was sunk. In his briefing to the new president, Eisenhower warned of the power and threat of the military industrial complex and of how in the unaccountability of the CIA, America had created a monster. Kennedy came to the presidency aware of the closeness of death and of the possible danger to him from these forces. In his inaugural address Kennedy balanced cold war statements with the hope that "*Both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the quest for destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self destruc-*

tion."

He was soon confronted by the ill-fated CIA operation to invade Cuba (the Bay of Pigs) Kennedy refused to send in US combat forces to rescue the operation creating anger and frustration in the anti Castro forces. In July 1961 the Joint Chiefs of Staff presented a plan for a pre-emptive nuclear strike on the Soviet Union. In August 1961 the Soviet Union began testing Hydrogen bombs. In September Kennedy delivered a speech to the United Nations in which he said *The Weapons of War must be abolished before they abolish us.* This precipitated a remarkable secret dialogue between Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev in which they shared a common concern for peace and saving the world from destruction, a project in which both were ranged against strong forces on their own side who were pushing them in the opposite direction. The immediate fruits of this were the avoidance of a conflict over the Berlin Wall. In October 1962 Kennedy was confronted by the Cuba missile crisis which seemed to make confrontation inevitable. Kennedy accepted a proposal by Khrushchev to withdraw the Soviet missiles from Cuba in return for The US withdrawing missiles from Turkey. Needless to say the Joint Chiefs of Staff were outraged by this apparent back down. Kennedy maintained the secret dialogue with both Khrushchev and with Castro. He was also determined to reduce the number of American troops in Vietnam. Douglass documents in detail the intricately constructed plot which culminated in Kennedy's assassination including the careful grooming and preparation of Lee Harvey Oswald. He is able to draw on material that has only recently been released as well as the memories of people who were present and those who were around the military and

Continued p 11

political systems... He also describes the intimidation of those who “knew too much” to keep quiet about what they knew. He is in no doubt that the “Security State,” elements of the military and the political parties were alarmed at Kennedy’s peacemaking efforts and determined that he be got rid of.

Douglass’ conclusion is surprising: *the “why” of President Kennedy’s murder can be a profound source of hope to us all?* (p 381) He concludes that it was Kennedy’s courageous turn from global war to a strategy of peace that provided the why of his assassination. *“In the Cuban Missile crisis JFK had to confront the Unspeakable in the form of total nuclear war....At that moment when the world was falling into darkness. Kennedy did what his Generals thought was unforgivable.....he reached out to the enemy for help. That could be considered treason.”* (p 382) Khrushchev saw it as hope and responded accordingly. Douglass

describes a “cosmic moment, what the Hebrew scriptures describe as “turning, repentance.” The two leaders were doing what Jesus said: “Love your enemies.” *“That would be love as Gandhi understood it, love as the other side of truth.”* Each leader was beginning to see the other’s truth.

This is a compelling book especially for the faith based peacemaker. It reminds us that peacemaking is a costly calling. It will be opposed by every means by those who are sucked into the Unspeakable. At the same time it reminds us that it is possible for political leaders of opposed persuasions to embrace their own and each other’s humanity on behalf of humanity as a whole and to pay the price. That is hope. In the words of the letter to the Ephesians: *For Christ is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us... so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making*

peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

Postscript: Nelson Mandela

I have just received news of Nelson Mandela’s death. Mandela’s life is a classic example of the cost of making peace. Like Kennedy he had to confront the Unspeakable and paid the price. Unlike Kennedy, he was not killed. He was condemned to a living death on Robbin Island for 27 years. He was able to stare down the Unspeakable by simply surviving as a symbol for his people. When he was released after many years of campaigning and international pressure , he was willing to sit down and negotiate with his oppressors to create a peaceful outcome for South Africa. Above all, when he became president, he overcame the Unspeakable by his policy of Forgive but Not Forget. *Harry Kerr is a retired Anglican Priest and convenor of Pax Christi Victoria*

PAX CHRISTI PHILIPPINES APPEAL

On November 11th, following news of the devastating super typhoon Haiyan (or Yolanda as the locals call it) which hit the Philippines, we sent out a letter to all our members in Australia asking for financial support, if possible.

The result has been tremendous.

We have transferred two lots of contributions which translated as **US\$5,456 and US\$4,855** – both of which have been fully receipted by the Association - (a total of \$11,750 AUD, including bank charges) to Cesar Villanueva, a long-time Pax Christi member who is the Education Director of St John’s Institute Alumni Association. This group ‘took on board’ the relief and rehabilitation of two communities of 1800 people (300 households) in Cadiz city along the coast of North Negros, an area badly damaged by the super typhoon. And donations are still coming.

We hope to make another transfer soon at least as large as the smaller of two amount already sent.

At first, Cesar wrote, ‘*they are begging for rice and canned food for the immediate needs and roofing materials for the medium term*’. Then later he wrote that *as the immediate needs were being fulfilled, there would be roofing materials to purchase for so many homeless people.*

AN HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED.

Rita Camilleri November 30, 2013.



a joy and peaceful christmas to all our readers

By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death , to guide our feet into the way of peace.’ Luke 1.77

NOTICE BOARD

NEW SOUTH WALES

Pax Christi Meetings

We normally meet on the First Monday of each month at 6.00pm for shared meal that members bring and the meeting follows at 6.30 pm.

**Contact: Claude Mostowik
(02) 9550 3845 or 0411 450 953**

The venue: MSC Justice and Peace Centre, 21 Swanson Street,

Erskineville. 2 minutes walk from Erskineville Station

New Secretary

Marita McInerney is now the new Secretary of PXNSW. She replaces **Marie Therese Nilon** who has worked in the role for a many years .
Heartfelt thanks **Marie Louise**.

**Pax Christi National Council
Meets on Skype no less**

**than bimonthly
for issues of national import**

Contact:

**02 9550 3845
0411 450 953**

QUEENSLAND

Pax Christi Meetings

Pax Christi Queensland

Branch meets monthly.

Contact:

Pancras Jordan OP

0415 461 620

panjordan@yahoo.com

Clare Cooke SSpS

mclcl@holy.spirit.com.au

Daf Christi Victoria February Agape

Sunday 16 February 2014

1 p.m. shared meal.

2 p.m. Meeting

(Subject tba)

At

**at Kildara, rear 39 Stanhope
Street, Malvern**

Forums To Launch

TOWARDS 2015

Thursday 24 February

6.30 p.m.

Invitation for representatives of groups and organisations

Thursday 24 March

6.30 p.m

Invitation for all interested People.

**at Kildara, rear 39 Stanhope
Street, Malvern**

Further details from Harry,

03 9893 4946

ahmkerr@hotmail.com

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