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• The protest march for climate justice held in Bangkok, Thailand in October 2009 organised by the Peoples' Action on Climate Change, in which *Peace for Life* staff participated, was one of countless mass mobilisations across the globe aimed at raising global awareness on the imperative of reaching a fair, ambitious and binding deal on global warming at Copenhagen.

## Work for climate justice 'not done yet', vow advocates after Copenhagen collapse

"Not done yet" is now the rallying cry rousing climate justice advocates all over the world after climate talks in Copenhagen failed to deliver the highly anticipated fair, ambitious and binding deal on global warming, potentially causing even more misery upon millions of the world's poor and condemning the natural environment to the inexorable path of destruction.

Copenhagen was the deadline for averting such a catastrophe, according to environment activists, concerned scientists, and many leaders of poor nations as they brought the common banner of climate justice to the Danish capital, site of the United Nations Climate Change Conference held on December 7-19, 2009.

"Members of the WCC delegation [in Copenhagen] were unanimous in criticizing the agreement and recognized that once more, the poorest people will be those most affected by this unfair deal," said WCC programme executive on climate change Guillermo Kerber.

For the WCC, it is urgent for all countries to resume negotiations with the objective to have clear reduction targets for industrialised

countries to cut their greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020.

"It is [...] not too late to save the planet and its people. We have no choice but to forge forward towards a legally binding deal in 2010. This must be a rapid, decisive and ambitious movement," said Robert Bailey, senior spokesperson for Oxfam International.

"The struggle continues," Kerber said, emphasising the "need to build on the incredible mobilization by churches and the civil society over the next year, with prayers, bell ringing, and advocacy action."

The voice of faith rang loudly at Copenhagen as various faith-based networks made separate but common pleas for climate justice, both in the run-up to and during the talks.



The religious community was an essential part of the broad coalition of international environmental movements and civil society organisations that built momentum from a worldwide mass mobilisation believed to be unprecedented in breadth, diversity and level of coordination

This global civil society movement came together at *Klimaforum09*, the people's climate summit that ran parallel to the UN conference.



“[A] massive, peaceful protest of 100,000 people [...] was met with a heavy-handed response by the Danish police. Thousands of riot police swarmed the march route, blocked off streets surrounding large groups of protestors, and arrested almost 1,000 people. Arrestees were cuffed and forced to sit in rows for hours, as the temperatures dipped below freezing; numerous people urinated on themselves after being denied use of toilets.” (Adrian Wilson, “Crackdown in Copenhagen”, 13 Dec 2009)

Civil society was initially allowed to participate in the UN proceedings but its accredited representatives were later barred from the conference. The move caused mass demonstrations outside the conference venue, leading to a crackdown on demonstrators by Danish security forces and the arrest of hundreds of environment activists.

#### *Missed opportunity*

Copenhagen failed to reach an enforceable agreement that would bind rich nations to make deep and urgent emissions cuts in greenhouse gases and to commit to long-term climate financing and technology

transfer for poorer countries. It missed “a narrow window of opportunity” to stem the dangerously upward course of human-induced global warming and deflect its disastrous impacts.

“There is a narrow window of opportunity to [achieve] the global political and scientific consensus of avoiding global warming of more than 2°C above pre-industrial levels, or the 1.5°C goal of 100 developing nations,” according to scientists

and researchers coming under the Climate Interactive project.

Emerging instead from the unprecedented gathering of 115 heads of state and environment emissaries from 192 countries is a non-binding political agreement brokered by US President Barack Obama in a closed-door session with the leaders of India, South Africa, China and Brazil. The conference withheld its endorsement of the backroom deal, but agreed to “take note” of it in the summit’s final declaration.

The US-led ‘accord’ fell dismally short of expectations. No timeline was set to turn it into a legally binding treaty. No legally binding

targets were set to curb greenhouse gas emissions. The terms of climate financing for poor nations were vague, the figures committed grossly disproportionate with the hundreds of billions of dollars needed for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Retired Filipina diplomat Bernarditas Castro-Muller, coordinator for the negotiating bloc of developing nations in the talks, said most of the funding would come from loans and does not address the need to “pay the climate debt” of rich nations that have polluted the atmosphere for many generations. Climate financing is not charity or bilateral aid or development assistance, but a right and entitlement of poor nations, according to Muller.

#### *Catastrophic impacts*

The 12-page agreement paid lip service to the warnings of climate science. Instead of global targets, annexed to the accord with other mitigation plans are non-binding national pledges of CO<sub>2</sub> cuts that, according to Climate Interactive, “would lead to approximately 3.9°C (7.0°F) warming by 2100”, the consequences of which are catastrophic. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are believed to be the main cause of human-induced global warming.

*The Guardian* reports that based on a UK-sponsored economic review of climate change, “A rise of 3°C would mean up to 170 million more people suffering severe coastal floods and 550 million more at risk of hunger, [...] as well as leaving up to 50% of species facing extinction. Even a rise of 2°C would lead to a sharp decline in tropical crop yields, more flooding and droughts.”

“The science shows that could lead to the collapse of the Amazon rainforest, crippling water shortages [...] and the near-extinction of tropical coral reefs, and that’s just the start of it”, adds Joss Garman of Greenpeace.



• Africa contributes very little to the pollution blamed for global warming. (Photo credit: ©Reuters: Finbarr O'Reilly)

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, citing a report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, reminded the world's leaders at Copenhagen that the median temperature rise in the African continent is "roughly 1.5 times the global mean response."

"[T]hat is the crux of the matter. A global goal of about 2°C is to condemn Africa to incineration and no modern development," Tutu said. From such dire warning, the impact then on Africa of a 3°C temperature rise is unimaginably worse.

#### *Struggle continues*

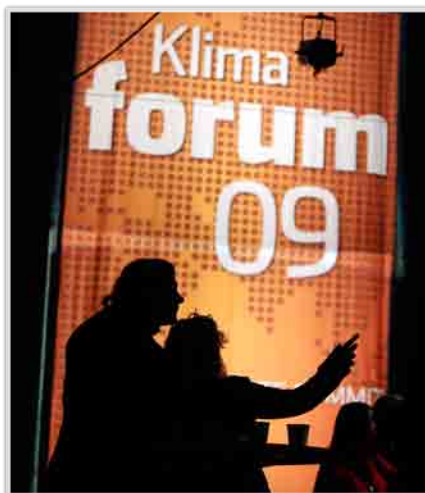
Given the grim scenario offered by the Copenhagen agreement, advocates for the environment face no other alternative but to continue the work for climate justice.

"While this deal cannot be judged as a success, it is impossible to be without hope," said *TckTckTck*, a global alliance representing millions of people that served as a hub of mobilisation for a broad spectrum of civil society organisations and networks, including faith-based groups, which called for a fair, ambitious and binding climate change agreement in Copenhagen.

"We have come so far in a short space of time. Millions around the

world look to the future and see hope, justice, and opportunity. It is up to each of us to make our voices heard and to get the real deal that the world needs in 2010," said *TckTckTck* partner organisations in a joint message after Copenhagen.

"Irrespective of the outcome of the Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change, there is an urgent need to build a global movement of movements dedicated to the long-term task of promoting a sustainable transition of our societies," concluded a People's Declaration that came out of *Klimaforum09*.



• *Klimaforum09* at DGI-byen, Copenhagen. 7-18 December 2009. (Photo credit: ©Mark Knudsen)

The statement, entitled "System Change – Not Climate Change", argued that the solution to the climate crisis "is a just and sustainable transition of our societies to a form that will ensure the rights of life and dignity of all people and deliver a more fertile planet and more fulfilling lives to present and future generations."

The People's Declaration, endorsed by hundreds of organisations and a product of months of discussions culminating at Copenhagen, was handed over to negotiators at the UN conference, representing the people's six demands, namely: (1) the phasing out of fossil fuel; (2) reparations and compensation for Climate Debt and crimes; (3) immediate global ban on deforestation of primary forests; (4) rejection of purely market-oriented and technology-centred false and dangerous solutions; (5) equitable tax on carbon emissions; and (6) democratic and equitable institutions that respect people's sovereignty over resources.

#### *Progressive faith voice*

Midway through the UN conference, church bells rang 350 times from Denmark and across Europe, North America and many other parts of the world to sound the alarm of the climate change crisis and to urge negotiators at Copenhagen to agree on a radical climate treaty. The number refers to 350 parts per million, believed to be the safe upper limit of CO<sub>2</sub> concentration in the Earth's atmosphere.

The WCC organised the coordinated bell-ringing, which called on people of all faiths to join with their own celebrations, in partnership with *350.org*, an international campaign dedicated to building a movement to unite the world around solutions to the climate crisis.

The bell-ringing was part of the interfaith celebration held on Sunday 13 December at Copenhagen's



• **March for climate justice.** The WCC and church-related development organizations were co-organizers of a civil society demonstration in Copenhagen on Saturday, 12 December. (Photo credit: ©WCC/Peter Williams)

Lutheran Cathedral and hosted by the National Council of Churches in Denmark in collaboration with DanChurchAid and the WCC. The event was one of the biggest gatherings of the world's most influential religious leaders, which included Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, and other faith leaders.

Before the liturgical celebration, Desmond Tutu handed over to Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, a clock representing 512,894 signatures for climate justice. The signatures were collected in more than 20 countries by the Countdown to Copenhagen campaign, a coalition of ecumenical development and humanitarian aid organisations.

"Faith communities are playing an increasingly important role in the fight to save the climate—they understand the risk both to creation, and to the poorest people on the planet. And they understand the hopeful role that they can play in moving political change through their witness," noted Bill McKibben, founder of *350.org*.

In Copenhagen, leaders of churches and international church organisations, comprising a high-level ecumenical delegation that included Archbishop Desmond Tutu, called on the world's leaders to "Act now!" as they reiterated the Gospel message "Do not be afraid!"

"[W]e would like to reiterate our firm conviction that there is an undeniable historical responsibility on the part of the industrialized countries for the climate change crisis that we currently face. The injustice is that those who are suffering the worst consequences of this crisis have contributed the least to causing this situation. This is a matter of justice and a call to moral responsibility. We would like to underline the importance



• **Archbishop Desmond Tutu** at a rally in Copenhagen (Photo credit: ©World Council of Churches)

of legally-binding commitments to addressing this crisis, that recognize a common and differentiated responsibility," said members of the ecumenical delegation.

As the summit approached its final day and talks threatened to collapse, the WCC issued an official statement to the UN conference, reminding the assembled heads of state that "the people that gave you the power to find a solution to this intricate and multifaceted problem" expect a Copenhagen global agreement that is "imbedded in justice, equity, solidarity, ethics and love."

"Do not deceive us. [...] Do not be afraid! Act now!" the WCC statement implored.

#### *Faith-based actions*

Various side events were organised by church-related and faith-based groups in Copenhagen to raise awareness on the moral and ethical dimensions of the climate change crisis.

"We have a bad habit, a belief in a theology of dominance that humans rule over the earth. Well, I have to tell you, sisters and brothers, it is past time that we confess that." This was the challenge made by Joy Kennedy of the United Church of Canada during her talk at the side event on faith-based approaches to climate justice organised by WCC and Caritas Internationalis.

Echoing Kennedy's plea for a 'theology of humility', Fr. Erny Gillen of Caritas Europa said "climate

becomes a focus that says we can no longer deny we belong to something larger."

The Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT) and other tourism critical groups, which claim that the global tourism industry is a significant contributor to climate change, dialogued with representatives of the tourism sector during a side event



in Copenhagen on December 11. The event was organised by a group of church-backed European NGOs which have long sought accountability on the social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts of travel and tourism.

ECOT presented its position paper, "Climate Change and Tourism: Call for Action by Civil Society Groups" as it called on the tourism sector to mitigate its emissions and to operate a paradigm shift to place people, and not profits, at the centre of its developments.

Fiji's Feiloakitau Kaho Tevi, general secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches, expressed the dilemma faced by small island nations when dealing with climate change and tourism: "Yes we are concerned about climate change but we are happy to receive tourists as it is because of you coming that gives my family food to eat. Tourism is vital for our growth. But people need planes to get there."

The ECOT position paper was endorsed by various organisations, including Peace for Life and other faith-based groups in Asia such as the Christian Conference of Asia, the Asian Muslim Action Network, Caritas Asia and the Pacific Conference of Churches. ■

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• **Tuvalu.** The tiny South Pacific nation is made up of nine coral atolls. The country has recently lost one metre of land around the circumference of its largest atoll. It can ill-afford to lose any land - at its widest point, the atoll is only a few hundred metres across. (Photo credit: ©Telegraph Media Group Ltd.)

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"The WCC is disappointed by the outcome of the Copenhagen climate summit." *World Council of Churches*, Dec 21, 2009.



## Resettlement due to climate change on Asia-Pacific church agenda

World Council of Churches - News Release  
November 11, 2009

Resettlement of people displaced by the consequences of climate change was highlighted as a major concern for churches at a gathering of ecumenical representatives from Asia and the Pacific region.

According to [scientific estimates](#), by 2050 as many as 200 million people may become permanently displaced by the effects of climate change, including rising sea levels, heavier floods, and more intense droughts. South East Asia, small Caribbean and Pacific islands and large coastal cities will be amongst the more affected.

Meeting 2-6 November in Chiang Mai, Thailand, some 75 ecumenical representatives committed themselves to "support Oceania churches' initiatives and advocacy efforts on resettlement plans, adaptation and reparations to small island states", which have been "rendered victims by ecological and climate change".

The [Chiang Mai Declaration](#) issued by the ecumenical gathering emphasizes the need to develop "the framework for a new Convention or Protocol on Resettlement to cater for forced ecological migrants", and concrete plans "to ensure respect for and protection of the rights of forced climate migrants".

Participants at the Consultation on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Asia and the Pacific were welcomed by Chiang Mai governor Amornpan Nimanan. The event was organized by the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Christian Conference of Asia and the Pacific Conference of Churches.

The consultation is part of the WCC [AGAPE](#) (Alternative to Economic Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth) process. It was preceded

by hearings of youth, women and indigenous peoples.

Asia, whose vulnerability to extreme weather events is aggravated by poverty, showcases the links between poverty, wealth and ecology, according to a report presented at the consultation by the [IBON Foundation](#), a think-tank based in the Philippines.

The report describes a context of grave ecological and economic crisis. More than half of the Third World's poor live in Asia. Even though it is generally viewed as a dynamic and promising place to invest, Asia is struggling with extreme poverty, thus reducing the capacity of Asians to cope with climate changes.

*Impoverishment, greed and violence: outcomes of a spiritual crisis*

"Our region's wealth is being siphoned off in the form of corporate profits squeezed from cheap, predominantly female, labour; external debt payments to international financial institutions made at the expense of massive cuts in social expenditures; the privatization and commodification of land; and exports of people, lumber and other 'raw materials' from poor to wealthier nations", the Chiang Mai Declaration says.

"We listened with heavy hearts to stories of: Burmese migrant workers fleeing political and economic oppression only to encounter other forms of oppression in Thailand; tens of thousands of farmer suicides in India; Asian students falling into debt because of spiralling tuition fees; women in the Mekong region trafficked into prostitution", participants stated in the declaration.

"Poverty is the result of exploitation and monopoly, and exploitation

is coupled with violence", said Jonathan Sta. Rosa, a young participant from the Philippines, describing how economic globalization impacts poor people in his country. Jonathan's brother Isaias, a United Methodist pastor and a member of a peasant's movement, was killed in 2006 in one of thousands of extrajudicial killings taking place in Philippines.

"In Asia and the Pacific, neoliberal globalization has taken a stronger hold in urban centres especially with the young people. The pressure to consume, to own and to conform is enormous", said Liza Lamis, a communications consultant with the CCA.

"The interlinked economic and ecological crises are manifestations of a larger ethical, moral and spiritual crisis", said participants at the Chiang Mai gathering. Therefore what is needed is "nothing less than a radical spiritual renewal [...] founded on the Biblical imperatives of God's preferential option for the marginalized (justice) and the sacredness of all Creation (sustainability)".

As "genuine faith and spirituality entail action", the Chiang Mai Declaration calls for "radical and collective responses, not only from Asia and Oceania, but also from the worldwide faith community". ■

*[Attending the Chiang Mai consultation on behalf of Peace for Life were Prof. Lee Hong-Jung of South Korea, who spoke on Pfl's work and perspectives on ecological justice, and Junaid Ahmad of Pakistan, one of the panelists on the interfaith question representing the Muslim perspective. – Pfl]*

[Full text of the Chiang Mai Declaration](#)

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Source:  
"Resettlement due to climate change on Asia-Pacific church agenda." World Council of Churches, Nov 11, 2009.



## Int'l seminar calls for step-up in Palestine advocacy

More than 300 Palestinians, anti-colonial Israeli activists, researchers and international advocates gathered in an international advocacy seminar to address the economic interests behind the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the potential impact of international campaigns for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions or BDS in promoting justice for the Palestinian people.

Addressing the theme “United In Struggle Against Israeli Colonialism, Occupation and Racism: Economic Perspectives and Advocacy Strategies”, the international seminar aimed to review local and international Palestinian advocacy mechanisms and “to determine the impact of such efforts so far, in addition to raising the level of cooperation and coordination amongst the various related actions and activities.”

The event was organised by Occupied Palestine and Golan Heights Advocacy Initiative (OPGAI) and the Alternative Information Center on October 24-25 in Bethlehem, Palestine.

Among the speakers was Pfl Coordinator Carmencita Karagdag who shared Pfl's experiences in international advocacy and its initiatives on Palestine solidarity. Upon her return from Bethlehem, Karagdag said the seminar “strengthened our resolve in Pfl to follow through on the [Pledge of Commitment](#) issued in Jordan at the closing of the 2007 peace pilgrimage and solidarity mission to Palestine.”

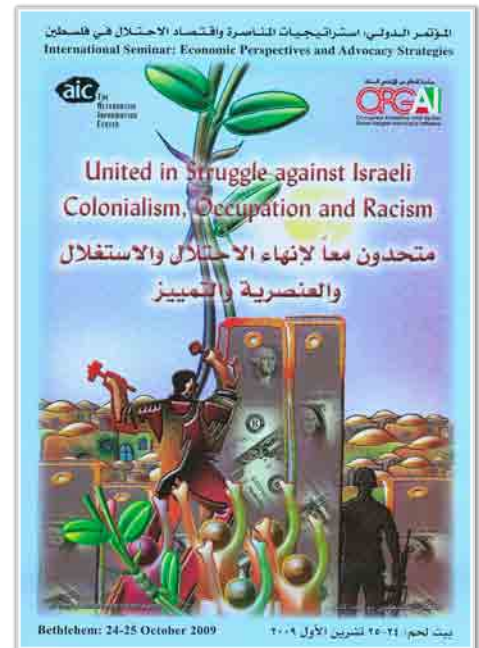
Also present was Prof. Lilia Solano, head of Bogotá-based *Proyecto Justicia y Vida* and a member of Pfl's Continuation Committee. She spoke on the Latin American and Colombian experience with international networks as spaces for advocacy.

Both Karagdag and Solano reported to have experienced being stopped and interrogated at the Tel Aviv airport where they were bodily searched and the documents they were carrying from the conference confiscated. *[See next article for related story.]*

In his opening speech, Bethlehem Mayor Victor Batarseh declared “this city stands for peace, this city stands for justice, this city stands for humanity.” Commenting on the role of religion in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Batarseh said “A state built on religion cannot be a democratic state [...] we seek from our neighbor a secular, democratic state.”

Father Jamal Khader, professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Bethlehem University, later spoke on the same subject, noting “We all know the conflict in the Middle East, Israel-Palestine, is not a religious conflict [...] but many people use religion to justify injustice towards Palestinians. I am talking mainly about Christian unconditional support for Israel in the West [...] We cannot, in the name of God, support occupation. We cannot, in the name of theology, support the oppression and colonisation of any people.”

In its [closing declaration](#), the seminar lamented the “continuing unprecedented state of polarisation within the Palestinian people” which has effectively negated



◆ Seminar poster using the artwork of Palestinian artist Yousef Katalo (Photo credit: Lilia Solano)

“years of sacrifice, struggle and accomplishments” of the Palestinian people and provided Israel with a “potentially historic opportunity to continue its politics of separation and expansion on all fronts, marked by the intensification of political assassinations, arrests, restrictions on movement and basic freedoms, takeover of lands, and the construction of settlements.”

The declaration issued the following calls:

1. To immediately restore Palestinian national unity.
2. To activate the Palestine Liberation Organisation in a democratic and inclusive manner that will permit the participation of all Palestinian forces and factions based on the Cairo Agreement of 2005.
3. To activate and construct Palestinian national frameworks that will reinforce the capacity of the Palestinian people to resist the Israeli occupation and to consolidate progressive Palestinian principals.



## PfL's Solano reflects on harassment at Tel Aviv airport

Lilia Solano, one of the panelists at the OPGAI-AIC international seminar on Palestinian advocacy, wrote an open letter to share her reflections on being harassed at the Tel Aviv airport after the seminar. Solano heads the Bogotá-based Proyecto Justicia y Vida and is a member of the PfL Continuation Committee.

PfL Coordinator Carmencita Karagdag said, "It was a terrible experience, but hardly unexpected.

[...] I too went through nearly the same ordeal at the Tel Aviv airport when authorities found supposedly subversive documents and posters on Palestine in my possession. The harassment took so long I thought I would miss my flight."

Dr. Mazin Qumsiyeh of Birzeit and Bethlehem Universities, who moderated the panel that included Solano and Karagdag, said "On the positive side, this provides us with additional motivation to work for



Panel session on International Advocacy Experiences and Challenge, with Lilia Solano (middle) and Carmencita Karagdag (right) as speakers. (Photo credit: Lilia Solano)

justice and certainly exposes Israel's fascist government for what it is, a rogue criminal state."

Excerpts from Solano's letter follow:

*The event was excellent, I was very impressed by the depth of analysis of the Palestinian leaders, their reflection over the manner in which Israel has denied recognising the Palestinian state, and with an astute diplomacy distinct from the use of brute force and open complicity of the United States, Europe's passive outlook, and Israel's continued occupation and their inhuman violations of the rights of the Palestinian people. It would take a long time to list all the crimes against humanity that Israel keeps committing in their rush to maintain hegemony in the region.*

*One of the strategies employed by Israel to counteract these criticisms and maintain their control over the occupied territories precisely a diplomacy geared towards deceiving and confusing international public opinion, by means of a direct denial of the occupation, oppression, humiliation, assassinations and the expropriation of homes and Palestinian lands.*

*As soon as the event finished, I set out on my return trip to Bogota, with some books on the situation of political prisoners, information on the advances of the campaign to boycott Israel, posters from the event and naturally, I discreetly packed the books and documents that I took. On Monday, October 26th in the Tel Aviv airport when checking my baggage, the authorities found the books I*

*brought as well as some small Palestinian gifts and started a long interrogation in which several people participated who examined absolutely everything I brought. At a certain moment, the group's boss appeared and asked me, "Do you know what this is?" to which I replied, "Yes, they're scarves," and he yelled with rage: "This is what Palestinians use on their heads," and he continued to ask me what I had been doing in Palestine. I told him that I only brought the documents to educate myself on the situation of Palestine, but this answer bothered him. After several hours of questions and my plea they allow me to continue if they take everything I had, they took me to a room with a sophisticated apparatus and reviewed every part of my body and then escorted me to the plane. As we were walking to the plane, the woman who escorted me said, "Excuse the inconveniences," and I responded: "In any case, I will return because I'm a humanist."*

*I sat, incredulous, in the plane over what had happened, and I thought of everything I had heard during the conference and of the difficult struggle that could finish with the devastating occupation of Israel in Palestine and the restoration of their rights as a nation. [October 31, 2009] ■*

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

4. To continue the efforts on all levels to hold the state of Israel and its leadership accountable for war crimes and crimes against humanity in international courts and milieus.
5. To consolidate and continue the efforts to end the blockade on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.
6. To firmly oppose politics and projects of normalisation with

Israel in the Arab world by activating the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions for Palestine campaign (BDS).

7. To emphasise the 2005 invitation extended by Palestinian civil society to conscientious Israelis to support the call for BDS for the sake of justice and genuine peace.
8. To reinforce a stronger and more efficient position in the Arab

states and societies to defend Jerusalem, in addition to boycotting all political, economic and cultural activities complicit with Israeli efforts to Judaize and isolate Jerusalem. ■

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# A Palestinian Christian call to end the occupation

World Council of Churches - News Release  
December 11, 2009

A group of Palestinian Christians representing a variety of churches and church-related organizations have issued an animated and prayerful call for an end to occupation of Palestine by Israel.

The call, issued at a 11 December meeting in Bethlehem, comes at a time when many Palestinians believe they have reached a dead end. It raises questions to the international community, political leaders in the region, and the churches worldwide about their contribution to the Palestinian people's pursuit of freedom. Even in the midst of "our catastrophe" the call is described as a word of faith, hope and love.

Referred to as "The Kairos Palestine Document" the call echoes a similar summons issued by South African churches in the mid-1980s at the height of repression under the apartheid regime. That call served to galvanize churches and the wider public in a concerted effort that eventually brought the end of apartheid.

The authors of the Kairos Palestine Document, among them Patriarch Emeritus Michel Sabbah from the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Lutheran Bishop of Jerusalem Munib Younan, and Archbishop Theodosios Atallah Hanna from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, have raised the challenge of the urgency for peace with justice to religious and political leaders in Palestinian and the Israeli society, international community, and to "our Christian brothers and sisters in the churches" around the world. They believe that current efforts in the Middle East are confined to managing the crisis rather than finding pertinent and long term solutions to the crisis.

## *Decrying empty promises*

Expressing their pain, the signatories of the call decry the emptiness

of the promises and pronouncements about peace in the region. They remind the world about the separation wall erected on Palestinian territory, the blockade of Gaza, how Israeli settlements ravage their land, the humiliation at military checkpoints, the restrictions of religious liberty and controlled access to holy places, the plight of refugees awaiting their right of return, prisoners languishing in Israeli prisons and Israel's blatant disregard of international law, as well as the paralysis of the international community in the face of this tragedy.

Rejecting Israeli justifications for their actions as being in self-defence, they unambiguously state that if there were no occupation, "there would be no resistance, no fear and no insecurity."

They argue: "God created us not to engage in strife and conflict but together build up the land in love and mutual respect. Our land has a universal mission, and the promise of the land has never been a political programme, but rather the prelude to complete universal salvation. Our connectedness to this land is a natural right. It is not an ideological or a theological question only." They reject any use of the Bible to legitimize or support

political options and positions that are based upon injustice.

Declaring the occupation of Palestinian land as a sin against God and humanity, they steadfastly adhere to the signs of hope such as "local centres of theology" and "numerous meetings for inter-religious dialogue", recognizing that these signs provide hope to the resistance of the occupation. Through the logic of peaceful resistance, resistance is as much a right as it is a duty as it has the potential to hasten the time of reconciliation.

Asserting that this is a moment demanding repentance for past actions, either for using hatred as an instrument of resistance or the willingness to be indifferent and absorbed by faulty theological positions, the group calls on the international community and Palestinians for steadfastness in this time of trial. "Come and see [so we can make known to you] the truth of our reality", they appeal.

Poignantly, they conclude, "in the absence of all hope, we cry out our cry of hope. We believe in God, good and just. We believe that God's goodness will finally triumph over the evil of hate and of death that still persist in our land. We will see here 'a new land' and 'a new human being', capable of rising up in the spirit to love each one of his or her brothers and sisters." ■

The authors are:

- Patriarch Michel Sabbah
- Bishop Dr Munib Younan
- Archbishop Theodosios Atallah Hanna
- Rev. Dr Jamal Khader
- Rev. Dr Rafiq Khoury
- Rev. Dr Mitri Raheb
- Rev. Dr Naim Ateek
- Rev. Dr Yohana Katanacho
- Rev. Fr Fadi Diab
- Dr Jiries Khoury
- Ms Sider Daibes
- Ms Nora Kort
- Ms Lucy Thaljeh
- Mr Nidal Abu Zulof
- Mr Yusef Daher
- Mr Rifat Kassis - coordinator of the initiative

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Full text of the *Kairos Palestine Document*: [English](#) | [Arabic](#)

Source:

"A Palestinian Christian call to end the occupation." World Council of Churches, Dec 11, 2009.



## Kobia decries Israeli plan to build 900 houses on Palestinian land

The WCC general secretary called on the Council's member churches, ecumenical partners, specialised ministries and agencies to "mobilise their members and the public" to resist Israel's approval of the construction of 900 new housing units in the Gilo settlement located in traditionally Palestinian land in East Jerusalem.

In a [public statement](#) issued on November 19, WCC General Secretary Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia expressed "great disappointment" at this development, saying the WCC "strongly condemns the decision of the government of Israel to expand the illegal Gilo settlement as we believe that this decision will hinder attempts now in process to restart the peace negotiations."

"At a time when Palestinians—many of them impoverished—are routinely denied legitimate applications to build homes on their own land, the decision to approve construction of 900 new four- and five-bedroom housing units that will bring relatively affluent Israelis to occupied land is deplorable", Kobia said.

Quoting a position adopted by the WCC Central Committee at its meeting in September 2009, Kobia warned that "the continuous settlement of lands beyond Israel's internationally recognised borders (the 1949 Green Line borders) is almost universally rejected and met with widespread incredulity because it is illegal, unjust, and incompatible with peace and antithetical to the legitimate interests of the state of Israel."

The September 2009 statement noted that "if settlements continue to expand and proliferate, they will further complicate negotiations and may destroy any chance for peace", Kobia added.

"People of conscience and good faith around the world are looking to the government of Israel now to move toward the resolution of an

interminable conflict rather than continue with decades-old policies that have driven it toward the point of no return", said Kobia.

In a related development, Kobia also urged the UN Secretary-General to make sure that the recommendations of a key report about war crimes committed during the conflict between Israeli and Palestinian armed forces in Gaza at the beginning of 2009 are followed through.

In a [letter to Ban Ki-moon](#) on 18 November, Kobia cited "growing anxiety" amongst members of the international community that the UN Security Council could come up with "a resolution that dilutes the intent and scope of the Goldstone report".

The Goldstone Report, released in September 2009 by a UN fact-finding mission on the Gaza conflict led by Justice Richard Goldstone, found evidence that both the Israeli government and Hamas committed actions amounting to war crimes and, possibly, crimes against humanity during the three-week long war on Gaza.

The report asked the UN Security Council to give both Israel and concerned Gaza authorities six months to report on the investigations and independent proceedings conducted to address the violations identified in



◆ Bassel Araj lives with his parents and siblings in a house 100 metres from the pictured construction site in the illegal settlement of Gilo. (Photo credit: ©Joe O'Brien/EAPPI)

the report. If these were not carried out in good faith, the Security Council would refer the situation in Gaza to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

"During the Gaza War, civilians on both sides suffered and yet atrocities were significantly higher among the Palestinian population", Kobia stated. "The people of Gaza have suffered enough, and they deserve a respite in the knowledge that the perpetrators of indiscriminate violence against them will be brought to book."

As "durable peace, reconciliation and healing between Palestinians and Israelis should be based on justice", Kobia added, "the need of the hour is an unequivocal affirmation of the highest principles of justice, human rights and humanitarian practices". ■

Reference:  
 "Gilo settlement expansion." *World Council of Churches*, Nov 19, 2009.  
 "Letter to the UN Secretary-General on the Goldstone report." *World Council of Churches*, Nov 18, 2009.

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

politicians, and has strengthened racist and anti-foreigner sentiments everywhere in Europe.

Domestic peace and political stability in the larger Europe will depend on how the peoples of the continent will deal with the multicultural realities of our time. Religious discrimination and double standards in the application of human rights may bring Europe one step closer to a "clash of civilizations" that will

endanger the continent's future, the President of the I.P.O. concluded. ■

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Source:  
 "Swiss minaret ban violates basic human rights and threatens religious peace in Europe." *I.P.O. Information Service*, Dec 3, 2009.



# Swiss minaret ban violates basic human rights and threatens religious peace in Europe

*Statement of the President of the International Progress Organization*

I.P.O. Information Service – News Release  
Vienna, 3 December 2009 | P/RE/22013c-is

In a statement issued yesterday, the President of the International Progress Organization (I.P.O.), Dr. Hans Köchler, strongly condemned the amendment to the Constitution of the Swiss Confederation, which bans the building of minarets.

The provision of Art. 72, Par. 3 of the amended Federal Constitution – “Der Bau von Minaretten ist verboten” / “The building of minarets is prohibited” – constitutes a clear and open violation of Switzerland’s legal obligations as a State Party to the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (to which Switzerland acceded on 18 June 1992) and of the *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* (which Switzerland ratified on 28 November 1974).

Art. 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 16 December 1966, provides that everyone shall have the “freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.” Art. 9 of the European Human Rights Convention contains an identical provision; Art. 14 of that Convention furthermore prohibits discrimination on the ground of religion.

Because the minaret ban has been enacted by means of an amendment to the Federal Constitution – through Federal Popular Initiative and Referendum –, a judicial review within the Swiss constitutional system appears unlikely. The Swiss citizens have to be reminded, however, that even they – as the “sovereign people” and supreme

political authority under the country’s Constitution – cannot abrogate basic human rights norms, which (a) form part of *jus cogens* and (b) are international treaty obligations of the Swiss Confederation. It makes



■ Mahmood Mosque in Zürich, Switzerland  
(Photo credit: © Adrian Michael/Wikimedia Commons)

no difference whether decisions have been made by way of direct or representative democracy: the principle of *pacta sunt servanda* applies in all circumstances.

The President of the International Progress Organization appealed to the UN Human Rights Council to address, on the basis of its mandate as subsidiary organ of the United Nations General Assembly,

the situation resulting from Switzerland’s violation of the right to freedom of religion.

Dr. Köchler further stated that, by virtue of Art. 33 of the European Human Rights Convention, any State Party to the Convention may refer Switzerland’s breach of her obligations under Arts. 9 and 14 of the Convention to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Irrespective of individual applications by Swiss citizens whose rights have been violated by the ban, it is to be hoped that at least one Member State of the Council of Europe will raise the issue before the Court.

He further said that the minaret ban has seriously damaged Switzerland’s reputation as host country of United Nations human rights bodies and as depositary State of the Geneva Conventions. Switzerland must not engage in a policy of double standards, preaching respect of human rights abroad and violating one of the most basic rights at home.

The President of the International Progress Organization also condemned the incitement to hatred and the anti-Islamic campaign that preceded the referendum in Switzerland. The blatant and discriminatory interference by the Swiss electorate into the Muslim community’s exercise of religious freedom not only threatens inter-religious peace in Switzerland and Europe, but seriously undermines efforts at a better understanding between Christians and Muslims worldwide. Regrettably, the Swiss electorate’s decision has further emboldened anti-Islamic groups and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10



## Church leaders recommit to reunification of Korean Peninsula

“In a momentary foretaste of Korean reunification, two Korean pastors—one from the north, one from the south—bridged more than 60 years of separation in jointly presiding over a celebration of the Eucharist during a worship service commemorating more than 25 years of work toward bringing peace and reconciliation to the divided Korean peninsula.”



• The Rev. Kang Yong Sop, chairman of the Korea Christian Federation of North Korea, and the Rev. Tae Jin Bae, of the National Council of Churches of Korea (South Korea) - bridged more than 60 years of separation in jointly presiding over a celebration of the Eucharist. (Photo credit: © WCC/ Peter Williams)

According to this [news release](#) from the WCC, the Rev. Kang Yong Sop, chairman of the Korea Christian Federation of North Korea, and the Rev. Tae Jin Bae, of the National Council of Churches of Korea (South Korea) led the ecumenical service during the international consultation that marked the 25th year of the Tozanso Process, a WCC initiative that brings together Christians from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in the north and the Republic of Korea in the south, as well as representatives of partner churches from other nations.

The consultation on “Peace, Reconciliation and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula: An

Ecumenical Vision beyond the Tozanso Process” was held in Tsuen Wan, Hong Kong from 21 to 23 October. It was organised by the



• Suh Bo Hyug of the NCKK speaking on the confederation option. Also in photo, middle, is Rev. Dr. Soritua Nababan. (Photo credit: © Leonid Petrov)

WCC and the Christian Conference of Asia and was attended by nearly 140 church leaders from 30 countries. At least ten of the church leaders present in the consultation were participants at the 1984 consultation in Tozanso, Japan, which initiated the Tozanso Process.

The three-day consultation included presentations from the churches of North and South Korea, a keynote address from WCC general secretary the Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, an overview of developments over the past 25 years, worship, Bible study and prayers for God’s guidance and inspiration towards the goal of peaceful reunification.

At the end of the consultation, the participants issued the [Tsuen Wan Communiqué](#) to promote the concept of “reunification as a process”. It called in particular for “the formation of an inter-Korean confederation even before complete reunification of Korea can take place.”

The confederation option would involve progressive steps such as peaceful co-existence and the furthering of economic cooperation between the two Koreas. It “would respect both governments”, said the Rev. Kang Yong Sop.

“North and South Korea must first recognize each other’s systems and engage in cooperation in any field possible, and institutionalize the results. [...] Only then will they move closer to reunification” added Suh Bo Hyug of the NCKK reconciliation and reunification committee.

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## Ecumenical leaders urge stronger actions against abuses in Honduras

An international ecumenical delegation met with the general secretary of the Organisation of American States (OAS) and representatives of the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C., 22-23 October, to urge stronger action against human rights abuses in Honduras.

Reports from Pax Christi International and an OAS delegation that visited Honduras in October reveal wide-spread abuses including intimidation, beatings and rape by government security forces since the June 28 coup d'état that overthrew democratically-elected President Manuel Zelaya.

The delegation's high-level meetings in Washington follow two ecumenical team visits to Honduras: the [WCC Living Letters](#) team that met church and civil society groups in early August, and the Latin American Council of Churches pastoral visit in late September. Both visits strongly urged the return of President Manuel Zelaya in order to hold free and legal elections within the country's constitutional framework.

"My concern is that the U.S. churches have not paid enough attention to the situation in Honduras, when, in fact, the coup against a democratically elected government is a threat to the stability of Latin America as a whole," said the Rev. Dr Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the National Council of

Churches USA and a member of the delegation.

Kinnamon praised the Obama administration for suspending military and most economic aid to Honduras, "but more attention to the situation is warranted."

Bishop Emeritus Aldo Etchegoyen of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina, a member of the delegation, stressed: "This is the time for President Barack Obama to continue showing the necessary leadership



• Bishop Emeritus Aldo Etchegoyen (Photo credit: © Vrijstad)



• Rev. Christopher Ferguson, WCC representative to the United Nations (Photo credit: © Pfl Secretariat)

for the restoration of democracy in Honduras."

The delegation's Lic. Noemi Madrid de Espinoza, Administrative Rector of the Theological Community of Honduras, declared that "the repression, arrests, forced disappearances and violence directed against the population and especially against women must come to an end now." Lic. de Espinoza is also Vice Moderator of the WCC Commission of the Churches for International Affairs and was part of the WCC Living Letters visit to Honduras in August.

Honduran soldiers roused President Zelaya from his bed June 28 and exiled him at gunpoint to Costa Rica, halting his controversial push to redraw the constitution but spurring fresh concerns about democratic rule across Latin America. Honduras's Congress formally removed Mr. Zelaya from the presidency and named congressional leader Roberto Micheletti as his successor until the end of Mr. Zelaya's term in January.

On September 21, President Zelaya re-entered the country and took refuge in the Brazilian embassy in the capital Tegucigalpa. Since then, the country has seen a dramatic rise in violence by the military and police forces, on orders of the de facto regime, causing further insecurity for the people of Honduras and a suspension of their civil liberties.

Other members of the delegation included the Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson, WCC President representing North America; Michael Neuroth, Policy

Advocate on International Issues, Justice and Witness Ministries of the United Church of Christ; and Rev. Christopher Ferguson, WCC representative to the United Nations. Bishop Etchegoyen and Rev. Ferguson are also members of the Peace for Life Continuation Committee. ■

Reference:

"Ecumenical leaders bring concerns about Honduras to Washington." *World Council of Churches*, Oct 29, 2009.

"Ecumenical leaders urge international agencies to step-up actions against abuses in Honduras." *World Council of Churches*, Oct 28, 2009.



## Churches deplore massacre in Maguindanao, Philippines

“A massacre most foul, gross, and utterly repugnant!” was how the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) described the November 23 brutal murder of at least 57 hapless civilians in Maguindanao Province in Mindanao, Philippines.



◀ Cagayan de Oro City - Union of Peoples' Lawyers in Mindanao (UPLM), National Union of Journalist of the Philippines (NUJP) and Initiatives for Peace in Mindanao (INPEACE) hold an indignation rally condemning the Ampatuan Massacre, Nov. 27, 2009 (Photo credit: © [Arkibong Bayan](#))

In a statement signed by Fr. Rex Reyes, general secretary, and Bishop Nathanael Lazaro, chairperson, the NCCP expressed grief and mourning as it condoled with the families of the victims, which included at least 22 journalists, two lawyers known for their human rights advocacy (Concepcion ‘Connie’ Brizueta and Cynthia Oquendo), and supporters and family members (mostly women) of Esmael Mangudadatu, a candidate for governor in Maguindanao.

The NCCP deplored the gruesome massacre as “a painful reminder that government statements to the dismantling of political warlordism have been mere rhetoric. [...] Government has either turned a blind eye or entered into alliances with these warlords for political expediency at the expense of creating democratic space. Political

warlordism is a manifestation of a feudal social order and we join the call that it should now be a thing of the past.”

Mangudadatu is challenging the incumbent governor, Andal Ampatuan, Sr., a known warlord and powerful political ally of Philippine President Gloria Arroyo. The victims were on their way to file Mangudadatu’s certificate of candidacy with the Commission on Elections when they were waylaid in a deserted highway allegedly by 100 armed men led by the son of the governor. They were then taken to a hilly place where they were savagely massacred.

The Center for People Empowerment in Governance (CenPEG) pointed to the “umbilical cord that binds two powerful dynasties—the Arroyos of Malacañang

and the Ampatuans, warlords of Maguindanao” as the historical explanation to the massacre. “Their ties have been nurtured by political patronage that, at its worst form, breeds a politics of violence,” according to CenPEG.

“[T]his quid-pro-quo politics promotes the culture of impunity under which the granting of favors to key LGUs (local government units), that includes tolerating private armies, is taken as a license for a reign of terror that hardens the monopoly of local power and makes warlords unaccountable to no one. All these will explain why the Maguindanao massacre took place. Vultures suck each other’s blood and civilians become just a collateral damage.”

Bishop Felixberto Calang, chairperson of Initiatives for Peace in Mindanao (InPeace), noted that the massacre “should be seen from the wider perspective of the culture of impunity that prevails under the present dispensation.” InPeace Mindanao is a major Peace for Life partner in the Philippines and hosted Pfl’s First People’s Forum and Inaugural Assembly in Davao City in December 2004.

“Government cannot claim this as another isolated and containable incidence of violence, much less as merely an election-related one... [This] massacre was spawned by a culture of impunity that has long been kept unchecked by a government that is now widely perceived by the international community to be tolerant or approving of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and other human rights violations,” Calang added.

Various international organisations and ecumenical institutions have added their voice to the growing outcry deploring the massacre.

The United Church of Canada (UCC) issued a public statement addressed to the Philippine Government “condemning the massacre... and calling



for an end to the underlying culture of impunity." According to the UCC, "The Maguindanao massacre is the consequence of the failure of Philippine government to take action on human rights violations," citing as evidence the unsolved cases of extrajudicial killings of almost a thousand activists and human rights advocates since 2001.

In separate appeals, the UCC, through its regional program coordinator for Asia Bern Jagunos, and the Asia Pacific Working Group of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (APWG-CCIC) asked the Canadian parliament to take action on the Maguindanao Massacre. They urged the members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Subcommittee on International Human Rights "to pass a resolution condemning the massacre... [and] to call on the Canadian Government to issue a public condemnation of the massacre and call on the Government of the Philippines to take immediate and effective action to bring the perpetrators of the heinous crime to justice."

They likewise reminded the lawmakers that "Mindanao, including the province of Maguindanao, is where CIDA [Canadian International Development Agency] has provided significant support for programs on Peace and support for local governments."

Bern Jagunos, who wrote on behalf of the UCC and the Stop the Killings in the Philippines Network in Canada, also sent the same letter of appeal to the Canadian Ambassador in Manila and to Canada's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

Kairos, a Canadian ecumenical justice coalition, condemned the murders and called for all levels of government in the Philippines to quickly bring to justice those responsible and renew its efforts to protect the lives of its people. Kairos

said that "the massacre is a grim testimony to the pervading culture of impunity and lack of respect for human rights in the Philippines." It called for "international vigilance" to ensure that the "perpetrators are brought to justice."

Two of the victims of the Maguindanao Massacre were Kairos human rights partners: Attorneys Concepcion Brizuela and Cynthia Oquendo, members of the Union of Peoples Lawyers in Mindanao, a precursor of the National Union of Peoples' Lawyers, a Kairos partner in the Philippines.

Bishop Martin Schindehütte, bishop for external affairs of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) wrote directly to President Gloria Arroyo to express EKD's outrage over the "escalation of extra judicial violence" in the Philippines. EKD also published a [press release](#) (in German) about the bishop's horror and indignation upon hearing news of the massacre. Bishop Schindehütte conveyed EKD's appeal to Mrs. Arroyo: "Please stop the spiral of violence and set up a clear action for disarmament of warlords and family clans. There is no way to peace than peace itself."



• Media organisations and lawyers groups led by BAYAN hold indignation and candlelighting rally at Mendiola, Nov. 30, 2009, Bonifacio Day. (Photo credit: © Arkibong Bayan)

Kairos members include the Anglican Church of Canada, Canadian Catholic Organisation for Development and Peace, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Canadian Religious Conference, Christian Reformed Church in North America (Canada Corporation), Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, Presbyterian Church in Canada, Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and United Church of Canada.

Bishop Bruce R. Ough of West Ohio, president of The United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries, and Bishop Joel N. Martinez, interim general secretary of the agency, stressed the importance of seeking justice in the murders that took place in Maguindanao. They commended United Methodist Bishop Leo A. Soriano of the Davao Episcopal Area (Mindanao) for his courage in condemning the atrocities and in holding the government accountable for the gruesome murders.



## PfL-ECOT, local partners hear plea from community periled by tourism

A coastal community of 42 fishing families living in Mantigue—a forested islet fringed by powdery white beach in northern Mindanao—is facing eviction because the local government wants to develop the scenic four-hectare area as a premier destination for ecotourism. Half of the families have left, accepting the government's offer of relocation at the price of 5,000 pesos (around 100 US dollars), which had never been fully paid.

On November 16, the remaining 21 families gathered to meet the 22-person team coming from different parts of Mindanao representing churches, NGOs and the media, along with two from the Peace for Life Secretariat in Manila. The visit was organised to hear the testimonies of Mantigue residents on the harassment they had been facing, not the least of which being the destruction of the school building built by the community from a private donation and the recall of the public school teacher assigned.

PfL and Mindanao-based organisations—Initiatives for Peace in Mindanao (InPeace), Sisters Association of Mindanao, and *Pamalakaya* (organisation of fisherfolk)—conducted a community hearing on the Eco-Tourism Development Plan of Mantigue Island, Camiguin, Philippines. The hearing was followed by a forum on the environmental and human costs of tourism in Mindanao on the theme “Tourism in Mindanao: A View from the Underside”. The forum was a localised version of the [October 2008 consultation on Philippine tourism](#). The two events,

held on November 16-18, 2009 in Camiguin and Cagayan de Oro City, were organised once again in partnership with the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT), a church-related advocacy group on tourism.

The Mantigue community has been facing various kinds of harassment including mass arrest, prohibition of any selling activity, and newly imposed discriminatory regulations on the operation of pump boats used for fishing, the families' primary



Descendants of the first migrants who came to the islet in the early 1950s, the residents of Mantigue are now illegal occupants, according to a local government plan to develop the idyllic area for ecotourism.

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Tribute to Atty. Connie Jaime-Brizuela and other victims of the Maguindanao Massacre during the women's forum on justice and culture of impunity, Dec. 11 at Batayog ng mga Bayani grounds. The event was co-sponsored by Gabriela, Tanggol Bai, Peace for Life and NCCP-Women's Desk. In photo are PfL founding member Sr. Mary John Mananzan, Rep. Liza Maza, who served as resource person at the PfL Second People's Forum in Bogotá, and Carmencita Karagdag, PfL coordinator.

The Middle East Council of Churches, through Bernard Sabella, executive secretary of Department of Service, also joined in “calling on the government and president to ensure that the perpetrators of this massacre are brought to justice.”

Rev. Desmond Jagger-Parsons, minister at Trinity United Church in Kitchener, Ontario, wrote in to share his church's modest act of solidarity: “Our smallish congregation – 150 or so – are reading and discussing this massacre in our Advent worship services... understanding incarnation in the context of the murder of the innocents in Bethlehem, and hopefully motivating our small group to continue in acts of solidarity in prayer and witness.” Jagger-Parsons has worked with both the UCC and Kairos on Middle East issues. ■

Reference:

“NCCP Statement on the Massacre in Maguindanao.” *National Council of Churches in the Philippines*, Nov 25, 2009.

“CenPEG ISSUE ANALYSIS No14\_Maguindanao massacre Nov 28 2009.” *Center for People Empowerment in Governance*, Nov 28, 2009.

“United Church Condemns Philippine Massacre.” *The United Church of Canada*, Nov 27, 2009.

“KAIROS Partners Murdered in Philippines: A Response to the Massacre.” *KAIROS Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives*, Nov 26, 2009.



means of livelihood. Armed paramilitary units have been stationed to patrol the area.

The families that have opted to leave regret their decision because the relocation area leaves them without any means of livelihood and the P5,000 promised for each family has not been fully paid. The 21 families that refused relocation are facing a criminal suit from the municipality of Mahinog, the town that has jurisdiction over Mantigue.

The forum, which dealt with the tourism program in Mindanao, an integral part of the region's overall development plan, revealed that the newly enacted Tourism Act of 2009 is already being implemented, its adverse effects beginning to be strongly felt in areas designated for development. The Tourism Act of 2009 offers a stronger incentive for tourism development than the previous programmes implemented regionally.

Sharing among the 46 participants from churches, NGOs and social movements in Mindanao who attended the forum also demonstrated that current tourism development in Mindanao is being carried out in total disregard for the rights and welfare of the inhabitants and the sustainability of communities as a whole. Bearing the brunt of its worst effects are the fisherfolk, Lumads (Indigenous peoples of Mindanao) and Muslim communities.

Tourism now ranks among the biggest causes of development aggression along with large-scale mining, agricultural monoculture, large dam projects and other development projects that commonly give rise to militarisation, massive displacement, land-grabbing, misallocation of social services and loss of livelihood for the affected communities. These detrimental effects eventually result in environmental destruction, worsening poverty and human rights violations.

The social impacts, such as the divisions these projects foment within communities, are no less destructive. For the indigenous peoples, the promotion of "exotic cultures" as a tourist attraction has the added effect of bastardising national heritage, alienation of indigenous culture and disrespect for their legal rights to self-determination.

Tourism as an area for advocacy has nearly been of any interest to any of the groups that participated in the forum. But everyone inevitably concluded that tourism development, as espoused by the government, is a form of development aggression not unlike huge mining operations and agro-industrial enterprises, carried out as part of a development project referred to as globalisation—where capital accumulation and free movement of capital take precedence over the imperatives of a human society.

the involved guides for the would-be eco-tourists.

The participants recognised that like any development project that brings serious repercussions on people and communities, tourism requires vigilance, organising, and the direct intervention and participation of communities if they should benefit from it and not the big multinational corporations alone. Thorough planning and strategising would be a necessary first step to counter tourism projects that run roughshod over people's rights and welfare.

Other groups represented in the two-part event were the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, Good Shepherd Sisters, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, *Kasimbayan* (a church NGO for community empowerment), United Methodist Church, Order



• The visiting team vowed to stand in solidarity with the beleaguered residents of Mantigue. Also in photo are Vivian de Lima and Iris Capus of the PFL Secretariat.

The forum resolved to be in solidarity with the inhabitants of Mantigue in their struggle for their right to stay in their homes and their right to their livelihood. There was also the shared view that developing the islet for ecotourism need not be an either/or situation for the community. With appropriate planning and proper training, the inhabitants could become the stewards of their beloved islet and

of St. Benedict, Consortium for Community Rural/Urban Development (CONCORD), Promotion of Church People's Response, *Suara Bangsamoro* (a Muslim mass organisation), *Kalumaran* (organisation of indigenous peoples of Mindanao), and various media organisations. Most of these groups participated in the founding assembly of Peace for Life in Davao in 2004. ■



## PfL U.S. partners gear up for 2010 'World Without Empire' global gathering

Peace for Life and its partners in the United States are organising a global event on the theme "World Without Empire" in New York City on 23-24 April 2010.

**World Without Empire: A People's Congress and Peace Festival on Spirit, Movements and the End of U.S. Domination** is an interfaith (primarily Christian-Muslim), intergenerational, feminist gathering of grassroots groups and intellectuals from the U.S. and Global South aiming to promote a North-South engagement in counter-imperial struggle and the elaboration of domination-free spirituality.

This event is another step in PfL's responses to the current geopolitical reality of empire, with its expansionist militarisation, neoliberal economics, hegemonic control of the world's resources, and untrammelled ecological destruction.

The focus of the *World Without Empire* events is grounded on PfL's recognition that in order to imagine a world without empire, all forms of empire consciousness and relations of dominance must be surmounted.

As a South-based solidarity network, Peace for Life has sought to address the problem of empire through people's forums, solidarity missions, roundtables, peace festivals in Manila, Mindanao, Hong Kong, Kathmandu, Mumbai, Karachi, Nairobi, the West Bank, Amman and Bogotá.

But while it has organised its activities mostly throughout the South, Peace for Life has not yet convened at the centre of empire nor adequately drawn upon the perspectives of those who *are the South* in the North – racial/ethnic and immigrant communities as well as the poor and unemployed.

Significantly, the *World Without Empire* events will be held in New York, the symbolic capital of the Empire and a city teeming with social contradictions.

Peace for Life too has yet to highlight the analysis of women and youth as

those significantly affected by empire dynamics. Women and youth representation is particularly problematic in patriarchal religious communities whose religious leaders are most often men, and whose youth remain poorly represented in the leadership.

Through the New York gathering, Peace for Life hopes to respond to the imperative to imagine a future that is not a reproduction of old ideologies and power relations.

In planning for this event, PfL and its U.S. partners anticipate a new social imagination and new strategies against the U.S. Empire emerging from the conversation between

## World WITHOUT EMPIRE

Global North-based youth, women of colour, new immigrants, faith-based communities and social movements, and their counterparts in the Global South.

Representatives of struggles in the Global South that PfL has supported (i.e., in the Philippines, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Kenya, Palestine and Colombia) will especially join the New York event in order to pose their challenges to the centre of empire.

Marginalising the voice of privilege, the People's Congress and Peace Festival will be shaped by three moments: a day of dialogue between movements of the North and South; a public fishbowl forum; and a Peace Festival.

Envisioned as a symbolic journey out of empire, the Peace Festival will feature youth involved in staged political resistance and in the naming of oppression through the arts. Artistic expression will be the catalyst of the Peace Festival's mission of

comprehending empire and envisioning a new way of living without global hegemony.

*World Without Empire* will link the *global* resistance to empire with the more national and local struggles and perspectives against forms of imperial domination *within* the U.S. It will also move away from institutional counter-imperial faith-based action to one that is geared to *movements*—South-led and South-driven—with a focus on women and youth and emphasising South-South solidarity for world peace and justice-making.

Including inter-religious voices and their concerns is especially important as religion now is increasingly being used to buttress and legitimise the US imperial drive. *World Without Empire* will however give particular emphasis to Muslim-Christian exchange while focusing on women and youth in both communities, recognising the special ways that the Muslim world is under U.S. hegemony today. The conference will thus seek to facilitate solidarity and partnerships with Muslim struggles in the U.S. and elsewhere.

The participants shall include U.S. grassroots activists, specially women and youth, from popular emancipatory movements, inter-religious movements, as well as from institutions and academic communities. Several representative international delegates from faith communities and social movements mainly in the South will be invited.

The People's Congress and Peace Festival will take place on 23-24 April 2010, excluding dates of travel. The Union Theological Seminary (UTS) in New York will be hosting the events on its campus.

Also involved in organising the events as co-sponsors are the Drew University, World Student Christian Federation (WSCF)-North America Coordination, and United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries (UMC-GBGM). ■



## Karibu Foundation visits partners in the Philippines



◆ Eilert L Rostrup, Karibu director, and Kristine Hofseth Hovland, member of the Karibu Board, speaking before the Philippine-Palestine solidarity group during the roundtable on "Peace in Palestine"

Representatives of the Karibu Foundation, one of Peace for Life's key partners, visited the Secretariat office in October.

The Peace for Life Secretariat had an opportunity to strengthen ties with one of Pfl's key partners, the Karibu Foundation, when its representatives visited flood-devastated Metro Manila in October.

Executive Director Eilert Rostrup and Board Member Kristine Hofseth Hovland were in the country October 8-15 for a week-long visit with Karibu's Philippine-based partners, which also included the Ecumenical Bishops Forum and IBON International.

Based in Norway, Karibu (which means "welcome" in Swahili) has grown out of a "faith-based commitment and a critical and analytical understanding of power and domination in the world." It aims to bring together and support agencies that use analytical insight, moral courage and strategic clarity in their struggle to create a just world.

Rostrup and Hovland participated in a roundtable discussion on Palestine organised by the Pfl Secretariat during their visit. Rostrup gave a historical background on the Palestinian struggle while Hovland, who was in Jerusalem under the WCC Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine, shared her experiences and challenged participants towards greater advocacy for a

just peace in Israel and Palestine. Attending the roundtable were members of the clergy, women, youth and academicians comprising the Philippine Solidarity Group for Palestine.

Rostrup and Hovland also joined the liturgical celebration for the third death anniversary of Bishop Alberto Ramento, former Obispo Maximo of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* (IFI) and a Pfl founding member. Ramento is the highest ranking member of the clergy to have become a victim of extra-judicial killing in the Philippines. The commemorative event for Ramento was jointly sponsored by the IFI and Pfl. ■



◆ Rostrup and Hovland at the closing rites of the liturgical activity commemorating the third death anniversary of Bishop Alberto Ramento.

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Among the participants who also happen to be Peace for Life partners and Continuation Committee members were Victor Hsu (Taiwan/USA), Rev. Gregor Henderson (Australia), Tony Waworuntu (Indonesia/Hong Kong), Rev. Dr. Soritua Nababan (Indonesia), Bern Jagunos (Philippines/Canada), Rhea Whitehead (Canada), Dr. K.B. Rokaya (Nepal), Dr. Jooseup Keum (South Korea), Fr. Rex Reyes, Carlos Ocampo and Carmencita Karagdag (Philippines).

The Tsuen Wan Communiqué also called for the lifting of all sanctions against North Korea imposed by the

United Nations Security Council; immediate bilateral talks between the United States and North Korea; and an end to the United States' "hostile policies" toward North Korea. The communiqué further urged the "cessation of all multinational military exercises in and around the Korean peninsula".

There have been setbacks in achieving these goals in the past decade as hostility between North Korea and the U.S. has led to the increased militarisation of the region. A change in the South Korean government in February 2008 revised its outlook and policies toward North

Korea. Its suspension of tourism into North Korea was accompanied by a downturn in economic cooperation.

The group closed the communiqué with the "fervent hope and prayer" that the Korean people will be reunited soon. "We long for the day when the people of the Korean peninsula, together with the world, can join together in thanksgiving and joy to celebrate that they are again one people and one nation." ■

Reference:  
"Church leaders call for an inter-Korean confederation prior to reunification." *World Council of Churches*, Oct 23, 2009.