



ACSJC BRIEFING

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FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Dear Friends,

Recently I returned to Australia from the 59th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Mr Christopher Keating, Executive Officer of the Adelaide Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission and member of the ACSJC, and I attended this six-week meeting in Geneva.

A Challenging UN Session

The 59th Session of the Commission was regarded as a particularly critical meeting. It was being held at a time when the authority of international law and the relevance of the UN has been challenged by the US and its allies bypassing the Security Council and invading Iraq.

Therefore, it was a great disappointment to many attending this meeting that a vote of the member states of the Commission defeated a proposal to hold a special sitting to discuss the war in Iraq and its likely implications for ordinary Iraqis. The Commission did, however, adopt a resolution condemning grave human rights violations by the Iraqi government over the years.

It was ironic that, weeks later, the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan

addressed the Human Rights

Commission with the following words:

“The decision to go to war without specific authorization of the Security Council has created deep divisions that will need to be bridged if we are to deal effectively, not just with the aftermath in Iraq, but with other major challenges on the international agenda...”

“This is a time when your mission to protect and promote human rights in the widest sense is more important than ever, your responsibility to act more urgent. And yet, divisions and disputes in recent months have made your voice not stronger, but weaker; your voice in the great debates about human rights more muffled, not clearer.

“This must change, if you are to play the role intended for this Commission, and if the cause for human rights is to be advanced in the broad and universal manner that we all desire. Inaction is not an option. The Commission must take an active approach if the wider agenda for human rights is to be realised, everywhere.”

The Challenge of Pacem in Terris

During our time at the Human Rights Commission meeting, we were fortunate in being able to organise a meeting in Rome with Archbishop Renato Martino, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. During that meeting we discussed a range of social issues experienced in Australia. The Archbishop noted the great work of the Religious, Diocesan, and national justice networks in Australia for justice, development and peace.

While in Rome, the Church commemorated the 40th Anniversary of Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris*. Pope John Paul II has often

spoken of how this encyclical is as relevant today as when it was promulgated in 1963 - at the height of the cold war.

Indeed, the call of *Pacem in Terris* to address the causes of conflict, promote the development of communities, and to defend life and human rights was at the forefront of many minds as U.S. troops took control of the centre of Bagdad at the time of this anniversary. Church leaders intensified the call for peace, humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq, and a central role for the UN in the reconstruction of the nation.

Archbishop Martino warned against the paralysis of key organisations such as the UN due to current international conflicts. He recalled John XXIII's emphasis of the importance of a world political authority capable of pursuing the common good.
(<http://zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=34017>)

Cardinal Ratzinger also stated that it should never be the responsibility of just one nation to make decisions for the world and that we must work with the UN to ensure that everybody is involved in the reconstruction of Iraq.
(<http://zenit.org/english/visualizza.phtml?sid=34068>)

And, in Australia last week, the Heads of Churches of Western Australia stated that the leadership and partnership of the UN is essential in engaging the people of Iraq in reconstruction. They said that Australia's recent involvement in nation-building with the people of East Timor revealed that justice demands self-determination that would enable the Iraqi people to determine their own future following the conflict.
(www.cathnews.com/news/305/19.html)

While our Prime Minister has said that the UN has a very positive and constructive role to play in the reconstruction of Iraq, he has also emphasised that other nations should recognise that the US and its allies are in control of Iraq.

The “Developmental” Challenge of Peace

The prospect of peace in Iraq depends so much on the processes of reconstruction and development. The point that *Pacem in Terris* makes so clearly is that peace

is not simply the absence of war or civil unrest. It is concerned with the development of communities and ensuring the civil, political, social and economic structures are in place to foster human dignity, the common good and the participation of citizens in the life of the community. *Pacem in Terris* speaks of the importance of values held in a community that would inspire peace: truth, justice, charity, and freedom.

The impact of a succession of wars, dictatorship, UN trade sanctions and the current invasion has damaged these basic structures which are necessary for a lasting peace.

Of course, humanitarian aid is the most urgent demand. The international community and aid organisations have been providing assistance in the aftermath of war. Caritas Australia has launched a special Iraq Appeal which is already providing assistance on the ground in Iraq. More details on this appeal can be found on the Caritas Australia website: www.caritas.org.au/

An obligation also rests on the invading nations to repair and restore the property and infrastructure that has been destroyed during the conflict. Beyond the installation of a US administrator of Iraq, the level of substantial reconstruction activity on the part of the US-led coalition of the willing remains unclear.

Both in the immediate and the long-term, the involvement of the UN in the central role of facilitating national reconstruction would seem to hold the greatest potential for lasting peace that would support national development in Iraq. It would also offer the best opportunity for the Iraqi people and the world community to have confidence in the new structures and institutions of this nation.

The challenge remains for the peace process to be handed to the appropriate international authority. There is also the challenge of Kofi Annan to UN Organisations such as the Human Rights Commission to take an active approach if the wider agenda for peace and justice is to be realised.

John Ferguson (National Executive Officer)

LATEST PUBLICATIONS

(orders Tel: 02 9956 5811 or email:
admin@acsjc.org.au)

ACSJC Briefing Paper: 40th
Anniversary of Pacem in Terris,
available on the ACSJC website -
http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/issues/40th_anniversary_of_pacem_in_terris.html

A 1990 ACSJC Issues Paper and Social Justice Sunday Statement:
"Social Justice in Everyday Life", has been updated and is now available on the ACSJC website at:
http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/publications/documentation/social_justice_in_everyday_life.html

CSJ Series no. 47: WAR ON IRAQ: IS IT JUST? Fr Bruce Duncan

CSJ Series no. 46: A FAIR SOCIETY? COMMON WEALTH FOR THE COMMON GOOD: TEN YEARS ON (Contributors: Veronica Brady IBVM, Michael Costigan, Julian Disney AO, Bruce Duncan CSsR, Robert Fitzgerald AM, Thomas Keneally AO, Lowitja O'Donoghue AC, John Phillips AM, John Warhurst

CSJ Series no. 45: Christian Conscience and Social Justice, Fr Neil Brown

All \$5.50 plus postage

THE STRUGGLE TO DEVELOP A JUST WAR TRADITION IN THE WEST - Fr Bruce Duncan wrote this as the first chapter of WAR ON IRAQ: IS IT JUST, but was omitted due to lack of space. However it is a free HTML or PDF download at
http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/publications/documentation/the_struggle_to_develop_a_just_war_tradition_in_the_west.html (PDF link at bottom of page)

SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR 2003 still available (cost \$6.60 inc GST PLUS POSTAGE).

CURRENT ISSUES

See
<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/mediareleases.html>

MEDIA RELEASE - 16 April 2003 - COUNCIL SAYS EASTER IS A TIME TO PRAY FOR WORLD PEACE - Australian Catholic Social Justice Council chairman Bishop William Morris urged Catholics to take the opportunity at Easter to "enter into the anguish of [Iraqis] and pray that a new Iraq will emerge from this chaos".

MEDIA RELEASE - 11 April 2003 - JOHN XXIII'S PEACE MESSAGE MAINTAINS RELEVANCE AFTER 40 YEARS - The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council said the 40th anniversary of Pope John XXIII's landmark encyclical Pacem in Terris provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the powerful document that still contributes to the Church's understanding of peace.

MEDIA RELEASE - WAR ON IRAQ - 20 March 2003 - The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council notes with great sadness and deep regret the decision to declare war on Iraq, and is dismayed that Australia is now engaged in a war that does not have the support of the United Nations and the international community.

MEDIA RELEASE - CATHOLIC STUDY CONDEMNS WAR - 19 March 2003 - An 18,000-word Catholic Church document has severely criticised the reasons given by the US and Australian governments for a war on Iraq as 'contrived and misleading'. It argues that the proposed military intervention violates the just war conditions and hence should be rejected as unjust.

MEDIA RELEASE - WAR ON IRAQ UNJUST AND IMMORAL - 19 March 2003 - War on Iraq fails to meet the conditions enshrined in the criteria for a just war and hence would be immoral and unjust, according to a publication of the peak Catholic social justice body in Australia.

MAY NOTICES

MAY - MONTH OF GLOBAL ACTION AGAINST SWEATSHOPS.

Participating organisations include Oxfam CAA and Fair Wear NSW. More info:
<http://www.caa.org.au/campaigns/nike/action/may03/index.html>

May 8: SBS Insight: The Story of Mohammed Saleh. 8.30pm SBS Television. Mohammed Saleh was detained in Pot Hedland for an extended period. When he became ill he was transported to a Perth hospital where he died.

May 19 & 26, June 2: "REACHING FOR SUSTAINABILITY: Environmental Challenges for Australia in a New Century" - Fabian Society Autumn Lectures 2003, in Melbourne. More info:
http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/briefing/Autumn_Lectures_Flyer_2003.pdf

May 22: Sorry Day rally, Perth at WA Parliament House Info:
<http://www.journeyofhealing.com>

May 24-25 Sorry Day weekend of Indigenous performances, Sydney Opera House. Info: see website above

May 25 Sorry Day, Canberra walk. Info: see website above

May 25 Sorry Day, Brisbane walk. Info: see above

May 26 Sorry Day, Adelaide. Info: see above

May 26 Sorry Day, Melbourne, Journey of Healing march. Info: see above

May 26 Sorry Day, Alice Springs. Info: see above

May 31: INVESTING IN OURSELVES: Fair and effective taxation for an enterprising Australia -

Fabian Society, in Melbourne. More info:
http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/briefing/Tax_Conference_Flyer_2003.pdf

June 3: HUMAN RIGHTS IN AN AGE OF TERRORISM - Castan Centre public lecture by Sydney University Challis Professor of International Law Ivan Shearer, in Melbourne. More info:
http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/briefing/Shearer_flyer.doc

APRIL NEWS MONITOR

COMMISSION WARNS ON HOWARD GOVT PLANS TO GUT HUMAN RIGHTS WATCHDOG: Melbourne's Catholic Commission for Justice Development and Peace warned that a new Government bill would gut the independence of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Australia's independent human rights watchdog.

CATHOLIC HEALTH SAYS MEDICARE PACKAGE IGNORES LOW PAID AND FAMILIES: The Federal Government's Medicare reform package announced "disproportionately hits the hard up and the sick and erodes the value of the Medicare entitlement for people without concession cards", according to CEO Francis Sullivan.

VATICAN HAS ITS SAY ON SUSTAINABLE USE OF WATER: The Holy See has stated its strong support for water as a common good of humanity, in the face of increasing privatisation of control of water supplies.

JUSTICE CENTRE WORRIED AT PROSPECT OF VIETNAMESE BOATPEOPLE 'SCARE TACTICS': The Uniya Jesuit Social Centre criticised the use of the SARS virus "red herring" to avoid responsibilities towards two boatloads of Vietnamese asylum seekers understood to be heading towards Australia.

LOBBYIST REGRETS LACK OF POLICY TO SUPPORT RELEASED DETAINEES: Independent Catholic lobby group PolMin welcomed the Federal Government's release of six immigration following a Federal Court ruling.

RELIGIOUS GROUPS TELL UN THAT WAR VIOLATES RIGHTS OF IRAQI CHILDREN: The most basic rights of Iraqi children have been violated repeatedly by 12 years of economic sanctions and by the US-led war, mainline Christian organisations told the UN Commission on Human Rights.

JESUIT GROUP BACKS IRAQI ASSERTION ON AUSTRALIAN TREATMENT OF IRAQIS: The Uniya Jesuit Social Justice Centre said that liberation of Iraqis should "begin at home" in Australia's detention centres.

TASMANIAN ARCHBISHOP WELCOMES GAMBLING CAP: Archbishop of Hobart Adrian Doyle congratulated the State Government on its decision to cap the number of gaming machines in Tasmania.

LOBBY CHALLENGES GOVT TO BRING ASYLUM SEEKER POLICY INTO LINE WITH COURT RULING: Independent Catholic lobbyist PolMin has said the Federal Court ruling that the Government has no power to detain asylum seekers indefinitely prior to deportation requires urgent Government policy amendment.

CATHOLIC WELFARE SAYS NATIONAL STRATEGY IS WAY TO TACKLE POVERTY: Catholic Welfare Australia described as "lukewarm" the State and Federal Governments' collective commitment to fighting poverty in Australia.

GOVT ACCUSED OF FAILING ABORIGINIES ON RECONCILIATION: Religious and Church organisations unleashed a damning wave of criticism of the Federal Government for its lack of leadership on Aboriginal reconciliation.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC WOMEN SET TO CREATE "CULTURE OF PEACE": Three bodies in the Australian Church are combining forces in an attempt to foster a "culture of peace" through various activities taking place in the wake of the project's launch on Easter Sunday.

PALM SUNDAY PEACE MARCHES INCLUDE MANY FIRST-TIMERS: Many thousands of people took to the streets around the country to march against the war in Iraq and for world peace.

MARTINO SAYS UN'S ROLE NEEDED NOW MORE THAN EVER: In the wake of the military intervention in Iraq, Vatican Archbishop Renato Martino says a world authority that will ensure peace and promote the development of peoples is more necessary than ever.

KIMBERLEY BISHOP WARNS GOVT ON CANNIBIS TOLERANCE: Bishop Christopher Saunders of Broome said the Western Australian Government's cannabis control legislation will increase use of the drug in Aboriginal communities where it is already causing dysfunction.

MARTINO SAYS DEVELOPMENT MUST BENEFIT ALL: If world development is to be complete, it must reach everyone, says the president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Archbishop Renato Martino.

VATICAN OBSERVER WARNS AGAINST "LAWLESS" SEX TOURISM: Archbishop Pietro Monni is worried about the sex tourism "legal vacuum", and called for an appreciation of the efforts by religious institutions to combat pedophilia.

INDIAN BISHOP WARNS ON GM AS CROP FAILS: Thousands of farmers were left in the lurch in eastern India after the failure of a crop of genetically modified maize.

CATHOLIC COMMISSION

SUPPORTS UNIONS WAGE CLAIM:

The Australian Catholic Commission for Employment Relations (ACCER) backed the ACTU's annual wage bid on behalf of the nation's lowest paid workers that is due to begin in Melbourne.

- courtesy Church Resources' CathNews, stories in detail at <http://www.cathnews.com/news/304>

APRIL SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

MAY 3 - WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

- On this day we remember the contribution made by the press, the violations of the right to freedom of expression, and the journalists who brave jail or death to bring people their daily news.

MAY 6 - AUNG SAN SUU KYI

FREED - Aung San Suu Kyi is the leader of the non-violent movement for human rights and democracy in Burma. She has spent more than a decade isolated under periods of house arrest in Rangoon. Her oldest son accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on her behalf in 1999. The Burmese, inspired by her courage and leadership, continue to resist oppression and attempt to build a harmonious society where all people are valued.

"In our country, there are many races living together, but we have not been able to live together in peace because the situation does not exist where we can trust each other. So trust is a basic element for peace. Unless we can trust each other, unless we can be sure that we will receive justice, and that we also have to give justice, we cannot achieve peace." - Aung San Suu Kyi

Homepage of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi gives updated information about the progress of the movement for human rights and democracy in Burma.

Website: www.dassk.com

Aung San Suu Kyi (1996) Freedom from Fear and other writings

Aung San Suu Kyi & Alan Clements (1998) The Voice of Hope

Aung San Suu Kyi et. al (1998) Letters from Burma

MAY 10 - NELSON MANDELA DELIVERS HIS INAUGURAL ADDRESS -

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant,

gorgeous, talented and fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small does not serve the world.

There's nothing enlightened about shrinking

so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine, as children do.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us;

it is in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously

give other people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

- Nelson Mandela

Inaugural speech of the President of the Republic of South Africa.

Website:

www.pbs.org/newshour/forum/background/jan-jun96/mandela_inaugural.html

MAY 17 - BROWN VS BOARD OF EDUCATION

- This US court decision (Kansas) dismissed the legality of segregated education.

Linda Brown's parents and African-American

community leaders used the courts to challenge the exclusion of their child

from a neighbourhood public school. The Supreme court ruled unanimously that

the "separate but equal" clause was unconstitutional because it violated 14

amendment rights on the basis of race.

The ruling in favour of integration was

an important land-mark of the American Civil Rights movement.

MAY 27 - WEEK OF PRAYER FOR RECONCILIATION - Week of Prayer for Reconciliation is linked with National Reconciliation Week and always occurs between May 27 and June 3. These dates are significant: May 27 marks the anniversary of the 1967 referendum in which 92% of Australians voted to include Aboriginal people in the reckoning of the census; June 3 marks the anniversary of the High Court's judgement in the Mabo case in 1992, which recognised native Title rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to their lands.

PRAYER FOR RECONCILIATION

*In the midst of conflict and division,
we know it is you
Who turns our minds to thoughts of
peace.
Your Spirit changes our hearts:
Enemies begin to speak to one another,
Those who were estranged join hands in
friendship,
And nations seek the way of peace
together.
Let your Spirit be at work in us.
Give us understanding and put an end to
strife,
Fill us with mercy and overcome our
denial,
Grant us wisdom and teach us to learn
From the people of the land,
Call us to justice.*

(ACSJC Prayer Card)

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